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WITH THE RUSSIAN WOUNDED

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WITH THE RUSSIAN WOUNDED

BY TATIANA ALEXINSKY. WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY GREGOR ALEXINSKY. TRANSLATED BY GILBERT CANNAN.

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
ADELPHI TERRACE, W.C.

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A LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER

Dear Mr. Fisher Unwin,

I ought quite frankly to tell you that you have put me in a very awkward position by your request that I should write a preface to my wife's book, which you are so kind as to publish. Men, as a rule, are not impartial, and certainly married men are not. A devoted husband naturally thinks everything that his wife says and does admirable, while a husband who is, shall I say, indifferent to his wife, thinks even her finest actions detestable. In either case exaggeration is inevitable, and makes a sound, considered judgment impossible.

For this reason I am less qualified than anyone to write an introduction to my wife's book.

And instead of attempting to do so I would

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rather just give you a few facts as to how the book came into being.

It was at the very beginning of the war. My wife, who is, like myself, a Socialist, had and expressed certain doubts as to the eventual attitude of Socialists with regard to war. "Could a Socialist—ought he—to take part in war?" she wondered. "Is this war for Russia just and defensive? Do the Russian people think it so, and do they accept it?"

Such were the questions which disquieted my wife's Socialist conscience, as they agitated the minds of many Russian Socialists.

Knowing from experience that words and formulæ cannot convince a mind beset with doubts, and that only facts have the real power to convince, I said to my wife:

"You are a doctor. Go to Russia. Throw yourself into the activities of the war. Spend some time with the men under arms, and you will find out if the war is accepted by them, and if they have the will to fight and to conquer."

My wife went to Russia. After a year's work for the wounded, spent among the people,

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she returned on a few weeks' leave to Paris, where I live as an unwilling exile from my country. She brought me good news as to the attitude of the Russian masses towards the war, and she returned from the Russian front a firm champion of war "to the finish," because victory can be the only real end of the war for the Allies. What my wife saw on the Russian front, and generally in Russia, during the first year of the war, convinced her that only those who understand nothing about affairs can hesitate whether to take part in the war or not. For the vast majority of the Russian people the question is settled: they wish to defend themselves and to conquer.

My wife brought with her her diary, in which she had jotted down the facts that seemed to her most interesting. These hurried notes in a woman's hand were to me, as a poet has said,

> *"Like a shell wherein the fury of the sea lives on."*

I found echoes of my country's great struggle against the brutal invader, vivid pictures of Russian life during the war, of the courage

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and the sufferings of the peasants and workmen turned soldiers, of the devotion and tenderness of Russian women bringing solace in such terrible suffering.

Mme. Alexinsky's notebooks were not intended for publication. But, having read and re-read them, I thought they might usefully be brought before English and French readers. You are of my opinion, dear Mr. Fisher Unwin, and I am delighted.

One thing may astonish you, as an Englishman, when you read my wife's book—namely, that she has not even mentioned England, or the feeling in Russia about the English. I will not attempt to conceal the truth: England is much less known to the Russian people than the other Allies, and there are several reasons for such ignorance The chief reason is, as someone put it, that Russia is an Elephant, while England is a Whale, so that they have few opportunities of meeting and making each other's acquaintance. But now that the British Whale has made itself feet of steel, and is using them to surmount the blood-soaked heights of the

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Somme to dislodge our common enemy—now, you may be sure, our people will truly appreciate our noble Ally, England, the friend of young Russia.

That is all I can tell you about my wife's little book. As for the preface, I cannot write it; but if this letter will do instead, you are quite at liberty to publish it.

Yours very sincerely,

GREGOR ALEXINSKY
Ex-Deputy.

July 14, 1916.

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WITH THE RUSSIAN WOUNDED

I

A HOSPITAL TRAIN—TALES OF THE WOUNDED—SETTING OUT—TYPES OF NURSES—ON THE ROAD TO GALICIA

Our hospital train is like a town on wheels—a little provincial town, with all its petty business, petty concerns, petty interests.

In the middle of the train there is a first-class car for the staff; next to it is a third-class car, half of which is used as a dining-room and the other as a bandaging-room. Then there are the kitchen, the refrigerator, the linen-press, and the dirty-linen compartment. Another car is set apart as a dormitory for the hospital workers—

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that is, the orderlies, stretcher-bearers, etc. Except for these men the staff is "civilian," and is composed exclusively of women. Ours is a feminist train, and I am proud of it.

The administrative and staff cars of our train are linked between cars fitted out for the wounded, a second-class car for officers, fourteen goods-waggons for the men, fitted out with stretchers, and called *tieploushki*, and supplemented with eight fourth-class cars. These are set apart for slightly wounded men, while the fourteen waggons are reserved for the seriously wounded. Some of them are provided with eight movable beds with spring mattresses, on which the stretchers bearing the wounded are laid.

Our train is constantly on the move. It was made up at Moscow, and left there at the beginning of the war in an embryonic

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condition, fully equipped with medical requirements and staff, but without its proper complement of rolling-stock. This was completed at one of the big towns near the front, where the train attained its present constitution—that is, a long hospital train of three dozen cars.

When I first made the acquaintance of my colleagues I was, I own it, not a little surprised, on hearing the names of our staff, to discover that all their names had a German ring—there was not a Russian among them. Many of our orderlies had the typical appearance of the Germans: blue eyes, fair or red hair, soft features, slow deliberate movements. And this was no illusion: they are, in fact, Germans. They are Menonites, members of an evangelical sect which came to Russia in the time of Catherine the Great, who loved French philosophers and German immigrants. They took refuge with us from the religious

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persecution inflicted on them at first in the United Provinces and subsequently in Prussia.

Russia is indeed a country of boundless possibilities. Its Government, which was engaged in the persecution of sects among its own subjects, welcomed these men who had been denied liberty of conscience abroad. It gave them fertile land in South Russia, exempted them from taxation, and respected their religion, which forbade them to kill and to make war, excused them from armed military service, and used them for the auxiliary and hospital services.

As orderlies, these Russian Germans are perfect: very gentle with the wounded, very punctual, and very intelligent. It was plain to all of us that we could trust them entirely.

In each *tieploushka* there is room for a dozen wounded men. A *tieploushka* is a goods-waggon with a stove in the middle;

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beds on the floor, or fixed to the sides in three tiers. The full complement of cars for the wounded on our train is thirty-two. A lady doctor, assisted by a Sister, has charge of ten cars of "slightly wounded" or of six "seriously wounded." I have charge of six "seriously wounded" cars.

Before the train leaves the base we have to question each wounded man to find out when his wounds were last dressed and how he is.

You have to climb up into the *tieploushki* by movable steps, which are taken away when the train starts. You have to hurry to examine all the casualties before the train moves, or you run the risk of being left in the *tieploushka* until the next stop, because there is no communication between the cars, and there is no means of moving from one to the other without getting out. And there is no knowing when the next stop will be, as there is no fixed time-table in war-time. Sometimes the train jogs along

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for hours at a stretch, and sometimes it stops every ten minutes.

Once, as the train started, I had gone to the pharmacy, which was in a third-class carriage.

I had to wait until I could get back to the *tieploushka.*

I readjust the dressings when necessary, and sit on one of the beds and draw the men into conversation. They all tell me how they were wounded and taken away, and give me their impressions.

"Sister," said one of the men, "they are taking us to N——, and my people live at V——. Our train will go through V——. Let me get out there. I will see my relations, and come on after you to N——."

I told him I had no right to let him leave the station, and even the chief surgeon could not do it, as it rested with the military authorities.

"Then I can only stop at V—— without leave?" said the soldier half-questioningly.

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"I can't give you permission, but I can't keep you by force in the train," said I. "Anyhow, don't forget that you are bound for N——, and, if you stay a few days at V—— with your people, come on to N—— and report yourself to the commandant."

Two other men also expressed a desire to stay at V—— to see their people. I laughed, and told them that a whole car-load of wounded men could not stop at V—— without attracting attention.

The train stopped. I went to another *tieploushka*, and here, too, dressed the men's wounds and talked. At the next stop I went to a third, and so to all six in turn. Night fell. Worn out, I came to the end of my work and went to the dining-car. My colleagues were waiting for me, and we sat down at table—dinner-time.

V—— station. I got down on to the platform. Two of the men who were able to walk also got down. They were sur-

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rounded by a crowd of townspeople—old women, boys, workmen, moujiks, railwaymen. They plied the men with questions. Where had they come from? Whom had they been fighting? What did the Germans look like, and were they brave? Each of the men replied in his own fashion. Some of them marvelled at the technical preparations of the Germans. "Do you know how they make their trenches? An automobile drags a plough, which cuts a trench straight off, good enough to give fine protection against shrapnel and shells. What do we do? We peck away with a spade. It's hard for us to get the better of them."

The crowd listened to them sorrowfully, with bowed heads. An old woman mopped away her tears. No doubt she was thinking of her son who had gone out to fight this mighty enemy.

Another man had no sympathy with his comrade's pessimistic opinion. He had only contempt for the Germans.

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"They may keep the war going as long as they like, and sit for years in their trenches, but they will never conquer us. We'll smash them up, never fear; we'll smash them up. We have already smashed the Austrians. As for the Germans, it is all a matter of patience. There's no hurry about making peace. There is no difficulty about making it, but what would it lead to? We've got to think of that!" added the man, by way of peroration.

His words visibly encouraged the crowd.

Next day, about noon, we reached N——. The train was unloaded. I found myself outside the station helping to put the patients into sledges to take them gliding over the snow to the hospitals. There were four hundred patients in the train, and it took more than an hour to carry them in the sledges.

The people gave the soldiers a warm welcome, handing them bread, *baranki*

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apples, and cigarettes. They had all brought what they could.

The medical staff of our train consists of thirteen people, of whom eleven are women. It is truly a feminist train.

The chief surgeon is a lady-doctor of forty. Her energy is equal to that of any man. Her hospitality is that of a great hostess: she makes every guest welcome. She treats her subordinates well, but she has her little caprices, or rather her peculiarities. She keeps a keen eye on the sentimental propensities of the girls working in her train, and intervenes, sometimes very roughly, whenever she suspects a romance in the making. Every now and then she gives them an address, in which she violently attacks what she calls somewhat contemptuously "the sexual instinct" and revolts against the "weakness" of women.

Her androphobia may perhaps be explained on personal grounds. She divorced her husband ten years ago. Before the war

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she was living an independent life as a physician, under a provincial zemstvo. She has a son at school. When war was declared she left her ordinary work, her patients, her son, and went to the front.

The other women working in our train are mostly Russian intellectuals who can find no satisfaction in their ordinary life in the provincial corners of our immense Russia, and are seeking an outlet for their moral energy and their social aspirations. The war has the same attraction for them as the struggles and sufferings of the people used to have.

One of my colleagues came in the hope of finding oblivion and relief from her sorrow; she had lost her son, whom she loved passionately, and her husband, who was not only the man she loved, but a real friend and comrade.

Another, quite a young woman, had spent ten years in the country as a schoolmistress. She had tilled the soil of popular

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education under very disadvantageous conditions, among coarse and illiterate people, and hide-bound by the oppressive authority of the bureaucracy and the police. She is hard and embittered, and does not at first make a good impression. But when she is tending the wounded, the real depths of her soul are revealed, and through her usual tone of deliberate rudeness comes the glint of a kindly word, or a tender smile, with which she puts heart into the suffering men.

"There's nothing to groan about, is there? Patience! Just a minute! Does the dressing hurt you? It will cure you for all that. Of course it will!"

And she looks through her spectacles as though she were begging the man's pardon. . . .

Another sister is also a school-mistress. She has known poverty and toil. Her old father used to live in a village ten versts away. She loved him dearly, and wanted to see him as often as possible, but as she

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had no money to hire a carriage, she used to go and see him several times a week on foot, like a dutiful daughter, through all the mud and the bitter weather.

"I put on my big moujik's boots, and go and see my father. I am used to long walks," she would say apologetically, when she confided her secret dream of joining the army as a volunteer for active service.

She had only joined our train to be nearer the fighting line, and to join a fighting regiment at the first opportunity, to become a soldier, and to share the lot of the others. She had spent half her life among the peasants, teaching their children, and now that they had become soldiers, she wanted to stay with them and to be among them.

Fortunately, her desire will soon be consummated.

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II

ON THE ROAD TO GALICIA—THE KIND COLONEL—THE BOMBARDED TRAIN—ARRIVAL AT PETROGRAD

OUR train has been sent to D——, in Galicia. We have to cross the San to get there. As we approach it we meet several troop-trains, one after another hurrying past us. They are bringing up huge reinforcements, for a great battle is developing on the other side of the San.

When a troop-train passes us we stop. We put our heads out of the windows and shout to the soldiers, who shout back jovially. At the junctions the troop-trains sometimes stop alongside ours. The officers jump down and come aboard. We give them tea and coffee and sweets; but that is not what attracts them.

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"It is such happiness," they say, "to spend a few minutes in an atmosphere that reminds us of home."

Sometimes they have only just time to swallow down a mouthful. The whistle goes, and they rush to their own train, leaving their glass of tea still full, and tearing themselves away from our comfortable dining-car.

All that day we had visits from a number of officers from different regiments.

One lot—very young men they were—could not help smiling like children when they saw the coffee and sausage on the table.

"Make yourselves at home, please. Have some sausage," said one of our Sisters, "and we'll warm up the coffee."

The youngest of them cut the sausage into slices. The coffee began to steam, but, alas! the bugle sounded, and our guests fled.

"Give mine to my brother," said one of them; "he is coming on the next train."

The trains go by in a procession. They

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bring disturbing news. It is said that the Austrians have taken the offensive, and that the Germans have transferred their troops from the north to the south-west. Our army had retired. D——, whither we were going, had been evacuated.

The staff of our train were greatly upset.

"If we are sent back instead of completing our journey it will mean that our retreat has begun."

However, our train moved on, very slowly, it is true, but it moved on. Troop-trains went by incessantly.

At a little station, K——, quite near the San, we stopped alongside a troop-train. The officers of the regiment spent half an hour with us. They seemed particularly intelligent and sympathetic. Our chief surgeon yielded to the persuasion of the young Sister who wanted to join, and asked the officers if they would find room for her in their regiment. They said they would. The girl was overjoyed. She at once donned

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the uniform. She had had her hair cut at Kiev, but concealed it from us by always wearing a scarf. She appeared before us in soldier's garb, and she looked like a boy of sixteen.

The Colonel and the Surgeon-Major promised to look after our young colleague, and said they were sure that the soldiers would treat her well; and the Colonel led her along his train to introduce her to his men, to whom he explained:

"Here's a new recruit, a volunteer, Sergei S——, who is going to join us. Any man who cannot write and wants a letter written to his family, or any man who is wounded and wants dressing, must go to her—I mean to say 'him.' *Him!* you understand."

And the Colonel blew out his long grey moustache like Tarass Bulba in Gogol's story.

The Colonel's moustache was fiercer than his heart. He is like a mother to his men.

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He knows that some day they will go before him in the assault on the enemy's position, and that many of them will not return, and he wants them to have a good time on the eve of battle.

He ordered the soldiers out of the train on to the platform, and told the musicians of the regiment to take their tambourines and accordions and to play dance-tunes. He called up the little peasant-girls who were thronging round the train, and invited them to dance with the men. It was only eleven o'clock in the morning, but the impromptu ball was soon in full swing. The tambourines and accordions made the air ring with the blithe melodies of the polka, the *kasatchok*, and the *krakowiak*. The soldiers danced in the full heat of the sun.

At the end of the ball they made a circle and sang us a few songs, slowly swaying to right and left.

"Thank you! thank you!" we said. "Look after our little Sister!"

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"Have no fear. We won't let her be killed. We'll carry her out of the danger zone."

"Are you always so gay as this?" said I to the soldiers, as I watched the real joy on their faces.

"Yes, Sister, always when we are facing death. You know, we are going straight into battle. If one is going to die, better die cheerfully."

"But why do you say that? You are going to victory, not to death."

"No, Sister! Victory comes through death."

One of the Sisters broke in:

"Quick. Someone is taking a photograph."

We crossed the track and stood alongside a ditch. The officers, our new recruit and the chief surgeon sat on the edge of the ditch, with the soldiers and us around them.

Then the soldiers were photographed

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alone, with the accordion player and the dancers in the foreground.

No sooner had the camera clicked than the engine whistled. Our train was moving on. We hurriedly said good-bye and jumped into the train, to the accompaniment of loud "Hurrahs" and "Good-byes." Our train started amid the soldiers' shouts, and we left little Varia, now Sergei S——, soldier.

"She won't fare ill with them," said the chief. "If the Colonel treats his men so well, he will treat Varia even better. . . . Did you hear the story of the shop which the Colonel bought up?"

And she told the story:

"The Colonel was particularly concerned about the moral state of his soldiers. One day, with his regiment, he passed a little shop which sold tobacco, matches, sugar, etc. He went in and asked the shop-keeper:

"'How much will you sell your stock for?'

"The shop-keeper told him, and he pro-

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duced the sum he asked and shouted to his soldiers:

"'Boys, I've bought the stock of this shop. Take what you like.'"

The chief added:

"I asked him why he wasted his money when he had a family.

"'Family?' he said, 'what has that to do with it? My children have plenty to eat, and if I die someone will look after them. My soldiers are my children now. To-morrow we may be dead. Why should I save my money? No. To-day we will live together happily, and to-morrow I shall say: "Forward, boys!" and they will go with me to the attack.'"

The chief stopped, and silence fell on all of us. . . .

We are on the San. The train has stopped on the river-bank. We climb down from the train, and see another train coming from the same direction. The officers jump down without waiting for it to stop. The

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very men we had just left and our volunteer among them.

"What a surprise! Let us walk over the bridge. The train will crawl over and we can pick it up on the other side."

The bridge took us to the old Austrian trenches.

"How solid their trenches are!" said one of the officers. "Ours! good Lord! We spent last winter in filthy trenches."

He said his regiment had seen a good deal of fighting, latterly in the north.

"After all I went through out there," he said, "I have become a fatalist. Men fell all round me, but I was left safe and sound. Now we are all going to almost certain death. We have to replace another lot in the firing line, and we shall get the worst of it."

He picked up a piece of shrapnel and went on:

"Yes. You become a fatalist when things like this are flying over your head."

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I took the piece of shrapnel as a souvenir. Our train came up. We waved to the engine-driver. He slowed down, and we climbed in.

"Good-bye! good-bye!"

An hour later their train passed us once more, and we did not see each other again. Three days later we heard that their division had taken part in the battle, and that hardly any of them were left. Did our volunteer survive? or the blue-eyed accordion player, or the little soldier who danced the *krakowiak* so blithely with the peasant girl? or the Colonel, with his Tarass Bulba moustache? or the officers who walked with us? Are any of them still alive? . . .

We reached Lublin that same day, and as the train had to stop there three hours we had time to wander through the streets of the town. It contains many beautiful old buildings and churches. Alongside the splendid relics of history and religion are

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filthy slums of little houses and Jewish shops. The same thing appears everywhere in Poland, where the descendants of the Polish Catholic nobility live side by side with the Jewish tradespeople.

The train left the station and moved towards the trenches. The farther we went the fewer civilians we saw. Soldiers, officers, nurses in crowds. The postal trains do not go any further than Lublin, and all the district beyond is cut off from the rest of the country, and is the "military zone." The troop-trains go crashing by, made up of goods-waggons, bristling with grey *shineli* and rifles. These are followed by the Service trains, and waggon after waggon goes by exposing to view huge, queer-looking wheels, cannon and munitions, automobiles, and carriages for the wounded, which made me think of the carriage in which Charles XII. crossed the river when he was wounded at Poltava. Two hundred years have passed since then; everything has changed, in-

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numerable improvements have been made in the making of war, which has become a technical science, and only the ambulances for the wounded are the same, which means that the roads are just what they were.

At a station near Iv——, an officer came into our train. He had been ill, and had been sent to the rear. He was better, and was going back to the front to find his regiment. He told us many interesting things about the operations being conducted near Iv——. He said the Russians had very few men there, but were keeping the Austrians back. Their encounter had been very severe. Train after train brought up reinforcements to the most advanced positions, and our soldiers leaped from the train and went straight into the battle without the slightest rest. The officer was enthusiastic about the morale of our army. "We have a civilian army now," he said, by way of indicating the composition of the army, which was recruited from the re-

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servists "taken from the plough," though they fought none the less admirably. "Yes, it is a civilian army," he repeated. As for himself, he looked a typical military man, and this only enhanced the value of his judgment.

When we reached Iv—— we found that it was strongly fortified. The forts were full of soldiers ready for action, and all around the net of railway-lines stretched out illimitably in long straight lines, or tangled with knots, or set out in circles. From the window of my car it looked to me like innumerable fishing-nets of enormous size and strange design laid out to dry.

Our train acts like a huge pump. It goes up to the firing line, is loaded with casualties, goes away to pour them out into different Russian towns, and returns to the front to take away the stream of poor mutilated bodies.

We are returning to the battle-field. We

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are nearing Iv——. The line runs through wooded country. We can hear the booming of the guns. Our morale is not good. We are on the theatre of war. The staff of the train is disquieted. After half an hour's run the engine stops: the signal is against us. The booming of the guns grows louder and louder. Once more the train stops.

"Gentlemen," someone suggests, "better go and pick myrtle in the woods. It will be a little more cheerful."

We got out and walked along the line, so as to be able to jump in again when the train moved.

There was not a soul in the woods. Suddenly in front of us, in a clearing, we saw a group of people cowering behind a bush—two old, old peasant women and a little boy of six or seven. They all had baskets full of myrtle.

"Will you sell?" we shouted to the old women.

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"What does madame want?" they asked in Polish.

"We want to buy some myrtle. How much will you take for this basket?"

"What? Madame will give us money?" asked one of the old women dubiously.

"Yes, yes! Come over to the train. We have left our money there."

"Do you hear that? They'll give us money!" said one old woman to the other.

She straightened the kerchief on her head, seized her basket, took the boy's hand, and hurried after us. But before she reached the train she stopped.

"I'm afraid for him," she said, pointing to the boy.

"There's nothing to fear. Come quick. The train may go at any moment."

We climbed up into the train, and came back with some money, which we gave to the old woman, and some white bread, which we gave to the boy. The old woman was plainly astonished, but she had no time to

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thank us. The train went off, and she was left standing stock still.

Next day, about seven o'clock in the morning, we reached the station at R——, and the train at once began to fill up. The "slightly" wounded came on foot. Motor-cars brought the seriously wounded, who had been fetched almost from the first line; they were handed over by the field medical corps, who work in the trenches. Other motor-cars are used for clearing the "advance dressing-station," which is about five versts from the front.

We were authorized to go by car to the dressing-station to pick up the wounded.

We left by a local line, which went through fields and villages. The corn had not been harvested. Here and there soldiers were cutting hay and corn and stuffing it into sacks. We passed several groups of people—five, seven, ten together, old men, old and young women, and children. They

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were refugees. They had left their homes and were just drifting. Sometimes they were followed by a cart, drawn by a horse or a cow, carrying the children on a pile of poor peasant furniture.

The field of battle was not far off. An enemy aeroplane was flying overhead all day long. On the day of our arrival at R—— two bombs were dropped, one of which struck a hut inhabited by a peasant family. Another fell on a little house in which the advance medical corps had taken up their quarters. Part of the building was blown away, and the corps had to move. Other bombs fell on the road, and killed a soldier and a child and seriously injured an old woman. The peasants had fled helter-skelter.

The booming of the guns never ceases. Our heavy artillery is in action.

After crossing a bridge our motor-car stopped. There were other cars there already.

"This is the dressing-station," said the

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chauffeur, pointing to a little house. "They have only occupied it to-day. The place where it used to be has been blown up by a bomb. Go in; there's a doctor there."

I went in. The doctor, an elderly man, was sitting quietly on a bench examining a soldier.

"How did it happen? Tell me," he said.

"Oh, our lot set out—quite all right; no trouble—but a bomb dropped from an aeroplane and burst. The front lot got it badly, but we didn't suffer. I'm a little deafened by it."

"Hold your nose, shut your mouth, and breathe," shouted the doctor.

"Deaf," he added, turning to me.

"All right, my man. Take this ticket; you'll be sent to hospital, perhaps home very likely," shouted the doctor.

"Why should I go to hospital? I am quite well. I don't want to go home. I want to go back to my regiment," protested the soldier.

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"We'll see about that, my man," said the doctor.

Then, turning to me, he said:

"It is a very touching case this, and it is not the only one. The men very often do not want to go back to their homes. They get used to war. Soon we shall be so used to it that we shall adapt our whole existence to it. We shall live in the trenches, and bring up our children there."

"What do you mean, doctor?"

"I say we must not lose our heads, and we aren't losing them. Yesterday we had a bomb thrown on our station, to-day we have got another."

The appearance of a soldier broke in on our conversation.

"Your Excellency," he said to the doctor, "a telephone message to say that two officers have been killed. They want to know if their bodies are to be brought here or left there."

"Tell them to bring them here."

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"The first line positions are five versts from here. We have an advance medical corps working there," said the doctor to me.

He was called away to give instructions about the wounded men who were to be sent to our train. I went with them. We passed a crowd of casualties who were "able to walk." Some were leaning on sticks; others were supporting their comrades, although they were themselves wounded. With bandaged heads, arms, and feet, in their filthy and blood-soaked *shineli*, they walked along the road. All around them were the neglected crops, the ceaseless booming of the guns, and the little white clouds of the bursting shells. . . .

The enormous barracks by which our train had stopped was probably used before the war to store the fruits of peaceful agriculture. But now it is filled with the fruits of war. . . .

It was already five o'clock in the afternoon. We had to hurry to load the train.

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But they brought us more and more casualties.

"Ah! There it is again!" cried someone near me.

I looked up and saw an aeroplane describing circles above our train. In a moment there might be nothing left of us—that was my first thought, but it was forgotten at once, for my work left me no time to think.

Our guns fired on the aeroplane to drive it away. A shot! We all waited to see if it had hit the machine.

"Oh! It was such a narrow miss!" sighed both the wounded and the doctors.

The aeroplane wheeled rapidly and sped away, but an hour later it appeared once more above the station. The wounded were still being brought up. The orderlies were shouting to us from all sides: "Hemorrhage!" Most of the wounds were from shrapnel, with ragged edges, bleeding profusely. Work went on until it was pitch-dark.

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At last our train was full up. We set out, and our place was taken by another train for those who were left.

Our casualties this time are soldiers of the Imperial Guard. They are privileged to be taken straight to Petrograd, where they will be nursed by society ladies.

The journey to Petrograd takes nine days. The lines are congested, and we stop long and often. We often have to make way for troop-trains. Our train has become a regular hospital. We can do our work without hurry, for there is plenty of time before we reach our destination. We keep a close watch on our patients, for there is some dread of cholera.

During the nine days we have become very closely attached to our men. They tell us all their joys and sorrows. Speaking of our army's failures, they console us by saying that the Germans will, without doubt, be beaten by the Russians. They attribute

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our momentary defeat to a German "trick."

"They have been preparing for this war for the last forty years. They have adapted all their factories and workshops to war industries. They have turned many an honest man into a coward."

"How?" we asked, not understanding.

"Yes. They buy men and turn them into cowards and traitors who sell them our plans. We never did that, the Russians and the French. All the same, we shall beat them. . . . Our spirit is the stronger. . . . But Belgium is really the one to be pitied. Such a little country! . . ."

Sometimes they talk of themselves, and their people. A soldier with a badly injured foot asked me if his leg would be amputated, and added:

"I'm not afraid of going home, even without my leg. My wife, Masha, is a remarkable woman. She said to me, when I left: 'Come back to me, even if you

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have no legs and arms. It will be enough for me to look into your eyes.' She's a remarkable woman, my Masha. We married for love. My father and mother said: 'Why are you marrying a girl without a dowry?' But we have asked nothing of them. We have worked as hard as we could."

Another told me that his thoughts were turned to God. How often he had thought he must be killed, only to escape! At such times he believed in God.

"You mustn't think, Sister, that it is fear of death. No. I am not afraid of death. Ours is a just war. No one can keep out of it. So no one can escape death if it is his fate."

Our conversation drifted insensibly towards Tolstoy and his teaching. The man had read some of his books, and knew what he thought of war.

"Do you know that Tolstoy's daughter, his executrix, Alexandra Lvovna, is also working in a hospital-train?"

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"No, I hadn't heard so. But why not? That only proves even more clearly that ours is a just war. We didn't begin it. No doubt Tolstoy's daughter shares her father's opinion about war. And yet she came out to help us. All wars are not the same."

One man showed me a diary in which he had written down all that he had seen and experienced—life in the trenches, and on the field of battle.

"I shall send my diary to my people, to let them know what we have borne in our fight against the Germans."

When we reached Petrograd we exchanged warm adieux with our patients. They appreciated our work and our care for them. They gave us their addresses and took ours. One of the wounded said to me:

"Sister, you must let me thank you publicly in a newspaper. I have a brother who works on the . . ." (he mentioned a daily paper). "It will give him great

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pleasure to write an article about all you have done for us."

His simple wish embarrassed and frightened me. The paper he mentioned is the organ of the Anti-semite Right, thoroughly reactionary, while I am a Socialist. My comrades would be very surprised if they were to see me praised in such a paper. I begged my patient to confine himself to verbal thanks, and not to give me publicity in such an important paper.

So we reached Petrograd. Our arrival called forth an amusing incident. As we had brought soldiers of the Imperial Guard, a crowd of staff-officers came to the station to be present at their arrival. There were a number of society ladies, some of whom looked like Baltic baronesses. . . . It might have been all very impressive, but a tactless remark by our chief spoiled the ceremony.

Before the men are handed over, the chief surgeon of the train has to report to the authorities.

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"Have you had no cases of dangerous illness during the journey?" asked one of the Generals.

"We dropped two men suspected of cholera at a station on the way," said the chief quietly.

Hardly had she finished her sentence than all the society people on the platform showed an extraordinary perturbation. The ladies and the various bigwigs vanished away. It was in vain that our chief shouted that there were no cases of cholera on the train, and that all our men had passed the period of incubation and were perfectly healthy. No one heard her.

"A train full of cholera has been brought to Petrograd!" was the agitated cry.

We watched the scene, and could not keep back our smiles.

"How could you bring cholera to Petrograd, Sister?" said a very smart officer to me.

I replied:

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"We did not bring it. Your own imaginations have done *that*."

He looked at me, and was rather disgruntled.

All the great personages who had come to the station to greet us had vanished. We waited for half an hour doing nothing. At last we were ordered to begin unloading with the two carriages from which we had dropped the two suspects on the way. The wounded were taken out with exaggerated precautions and wheeled away. And then we emptied the other carriages.

When our work was finished I was about to get back into my compartment when a nurse ran after me, pale and in great distress.

"Sister, do you belong to this train?" she asked.

"Yes, Sister."

"You have brought us a cholera case. We have found him."

I went with her to see the "cholera

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case." He was one of my casualties who had been particularly healthy during the journey.

"They say I'm a cholera case," he said; "because I ate an unripe apple which has given me diarrhœa."

With great difficulty I reassured the nurse and left her.

Our staff collected together in the dining-saloon, and we talked over the solemn "reception" which had been prepared for us in the capital. Everybody laughed.

"It was amusing for you, but not for me," said our Chief. "To-morrow I shall have to face the sanitary authorities, and prove to them, all over again, that I haven't brought cholera to Petrograd."

We comforted our charming Chief, and spent the night working together, all gathered round a table, the eleven women on the staff of the train, and composed a report for the Chief to lay before the authorities.

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In the morning she set out very gloomily, but she returned radiant.

"A bacteriological examination of all our suspects has been made," she said. "There is not a single case of cholera, and they even congratulated me on the condition of the men."

All's well that ends well. We had our orders to set out again. We are to go to Brest via Moscow and Smolensk

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III

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS' LEAVE—THE YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY—THE CHRISTMAS-TREE—HUNGRY SOLDIERS—MOSCOW

"WILL you give me twenty-four hours' leave?" I asked the chief doctor. "I want to go to Moscow to see my boy."

There was no difficulty in obtaining leave, because our train had to stop a few days at Brest for repairs, and an hour later I was in the train between Brest and Moscow. Among the passengers crowding round the third-class carriages were two wounded soldiers. I pushed through the crowd to them, and helped them up into the carriage. They could only walk with great difficulty, or rather, to be more accurate, they could not walk, but dragged themselves along like a dog that has been run over. However,

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we managed to get up the steps of the train into the carriage, when I got them two seats. The less injured of the two lay down on the upper berth, the other on the lower, and I sat opposite them.

"Why are you travelling alone, without nurses?" said I. "You are too weak to do it."

"We belong to your train, Sister," said the man in the upper berth. "We ran away without leave from the discharge-station. Our lot were to be sent to a provincial town; my wife lives at Moscow. We were married last May, just before the war. I want to see her again. I can't get on without her. I suppose you think I've done wrong."

"No. I can understand. I haven't seen my boy for some weeks, and I am longing to see him again. You haven't seen your wife for months. I understand. But you run the risk of being punished for being absent without leave."

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"Whom can my absence hurt? I haven't run away from the fighting line. Oh! We stick it out there on the firing line. But I'm wounded now, and no good for anything: I can take a trip. I shall see my wife. What harm can it do anyone?"

The ticket-collector passed through. I gave him my ticket.

"And where are these men going to?"

"Moscow—to the hospital."

The ticket-collector went away. My truants were in high glee. They lay down to sleep. They begged me to take their *shineli* and lay them on the hard wooden seat which was to be my bed. But I could not abuse their generosity. For a long time they could not go to sleep, and tossed about, stifling their moans, for their wounds had begun to twinge.

In the morning we had tea together, and they told me about themselves. One of them had suffered a great deal before the war. He had had differences with an officer

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in his regiment, and had been sent to a disciplinary battalion where life was hard. He was sent to Siberia, and there he met a girl, Maroussia S——, a well-known Terrorist. More than ten years ago, when she was at school, she fired at and killed a provincial functionary, who oppressed the peasants by defiling their virgins. She was arrested by two of this functionary's subordinates, who violated her. A short time afterwards they too were executed by the Terrorists, Maroussia S——'s comrades. . . . She was condemned to several years' hard labour, and perpetual exile in Siberia.

The story of this girl had made a great impression on my travelling companion.

"Now I accept nothing without criticism," he said by way of telling me his way of thinking. "I doubt everything. But, you know, I bless this war, I don't know why, but I am sure that, if we crush German militarism, it will be a good thing for the world and for Russia."

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The other man was most unlike his comrade. He was perfectly simple. He loved life, just as it was; he loved nature, the sun and the light. His marriage was no ordinary one. He met a friend of his sister's at her house. The girl was pregnant. Her lover, the father of her child, had deserted her. The first feeling he had for the girl was pity and a chivalrous desire to protect her. Then came love.

"I fell in love with her and married her."

"And does she love you?"

"Oh yes . . . Ah! If I could only just open my eyes and see her."

"You will see her soon. We are near Moscow now. But I am afraid they won't take you in at the Moscow hospital, and you'll have to go back to your own batch."

"No, Sister. I shall go straight to the technical school where I was working before the war. I was a laboratory attendant. There is a hospital in the building. They know me there and they will let me stay."

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"Moscow!" shouted the guard.

"Give me your address," I said to him. He gave me the telephone number of the school, and begged me to ring him up next day.

"And here's something for you, Sister. Read it."

He gave me his photograph, with a touching inscription. I promised to send him mine as a reminder of our meeting.

I held the weaker of the two by the arm, and we left the train. The platform was interminably long. The poor fellow groaned as he dragged himself towards the exit, and bit his lips to stop himself from crying out.

The nurses and Red Cross people attached to the station stopped us and suggested that they should take charge of my companions. But they were afraid of being detained and sent straight back to the place from which they had "run away"; and they were alarmed by the appearance of any more or less official personage. At last we left the

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station. I called a cab and helped them into it, while they suffered great pain. The passers-by stopped and looked at them compassionately. The cab started. In a few minutes one of the two would see his wife. And the other?

When I reached my house my little boy was already asleep in bed. His rosy face was framed in his fair curly hair. I took all the newspapers which had appeared during my absence from Moscow and skimmed through them in my boy's room. . . . Where on earth do the journalists get all the stuff they write about the war? The real war is nothing like the "descriptions" of it in the Press.

My boy woke up during the night, and was full of joy to find me with him.

"Mamma, when did you come? Did the soldiers let you come home? Will you stay for my Christmas-tree?"

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We talked for a long time, and did not fall asleep until dawn.

My day passed quickly. I had to go back "out there." Before I left I rang up the school to find out if my two men had been taken into the hospital.

"No," I was told. "It was impossible to take them in because they had no papers. They were handed over to the Commandant."

But, all the same, the young husband saw his wife.

On my return to B—— I had a working man in the same carriage. He compared this war with that against Japan, and said:

"This time we must win, because France is with us."

What did he mean? Are we to win through France's help? or are we to be victorious because victory is necessary to France?

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Late that night we passed through the station at Sk——. It was a beautiful large building, but it has been burned down. The Germans were there for three weeks, and only the walls, with the holes for the windows, are left. The roof collapsed during the fire. The white walls, blackened with smoke, look blue and sinister under the moon. I went and looked at the walls, and there was still a smell of burning, although the fire was five weeks ago.

"Sister, Sister, look out!" someone quite near me shouted.

It was a sentinel.

"The stones sometimes fall down from the wall, Sister. One day, when I was on guard, a stone broke loose, and very nearly struck me."

There were only our staff, the sentinels, and two railwaymen in the station.

While I was talking to the sentinel a crowd of peasants came on to the platform with their spades over their shoulders.

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"Who are these people? Where do they come from?" I asked the sentinel.

"They are Polish peasants from the neighbouring villages. They dig trenches from morning to night. Good trenches! The Germans won't get through them easily."

The Poles stopped and looked at us curiously. I had another nurse with me. I tried to talk to them, but conversation flagged: I do not understand Polish, nor they Russian.

Next day, about ten o'clock in the morning, we reached Op——. It was the end of our journey. We had to pick up a train-load of wounded.

It was Christmas Eve, Russian style. It was a bright, sunny, smiling day. Hard to believe that close by men were fighting and killing each other. But there was no escaping the reality. From an early hour the guns boomed incessantly. For a long

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time as we approached O—— we had heard the muttering of the guns, but, being used to it, we had not noticed it. . . .

The first line positions were twelve leagues from Op——. The battle had been going on for two days, and the guns were never silent.

We decided to take the soldiers in the trenches bread, salt, bandages, and blankets. Having got leave we set out. A special train was brought up for us, an engine and two cars. So we set out—the station-master, the medical officer, three nurses, five orderlies, and a guard of five soldiers. We nurses had brought a little Christmas-tree in a pot to give to the soldiers: we had decorated it with cotton-wool, sweets, and *prianiki.*

We had not gone ten kilometres when the engine stopped. We got down from the *tieploushki* and saw a group of officers near the embankment.

"The Germans are twenty kilometres away, and have been pushing their offensive

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since the day before yesterday. I can't let a Red Cross train go any farther. If anything were to happen I should be responsible," said one of the officers.

It was arranged that our train should stay where it was, while we proceeded on foot to the trenches. The officer who accompanied us offered me his field-glass. I looked, and to the right of the embankment saw columns of soldiers advancing like a long ribbon being unwound; further to the right I saw more and more marching in order like a swarm of frightened ants.

"What are they doing?" I asked the officer as I handed back his field-glass.

"That's our troops. If it were not for the mist we should be able to see the Germans, too. That is where they are making for," he added, with a wave of his arm.

We walked on for another kilometre, still keeping to the railway.

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"Here are the trenches!"

I saw a hole in the ground not far from the embankment. This was the entrance to the trenches. Stooping very low I entered the hole, and found myself in a subterranean passage, in which it was impossible to stand upright. The floor was covered with straw. Light came in through loop-holes, in which machine-guns were placed. Opposite these loop-holes, in a niche scooped out of the earth, was a stove, or, rather, a little wood-fire, on which stood a pot of potatoes. The wet branches gave out smoke which made my eyes smart. I longed to get away as quickly as possible out into the open air.

"Have you been here long?" I asked the soldiers.

"We withdrew here yesterday, at six in the morning, when we were relieved from our old positions. We have no bread nor salt. Could you give us a little salt, Sister?"

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We left the trenches to find that our train had come up. One of the nurses was giving the soldiers linen bandages, and I went with our housekeeper distributing bread and salt. While the housekeeper poured out the salt, I cut the bread into hunks and pressed them into the outstretched hands. The crowd swelled round the train.

"Give us some bread, Sister, please! I can't remember when I last ate good sweet white bread. We have had nothing but biscuit."

I saw hundreds of pairs of eyes gazing at me in impatient expectancy, following my every movement.

I quickly cut hunk after hunk. The men snatched them from me. One of them, unable to contain his hunger, picked up the crumbs on the steps of the car and gulped them down.

The sight of these hungry men was more painful to me than all the wounds I had seen.

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The housekeeper came up.

"Sister, we can't satisfy them all at this rate. Our train can't stay long here. I will hand out the bread company by company, ten loaves each."

I agreed, and got down from the car. Talking to one soldier, I saw that he had an Austrian bayonet.

"Will you sell it me?"

"Yes, Sister," he replied indifferently.

"How much do you want?"

"Can you give fifty kopecks?"

I gave him the money, and took the bayonet.

He took the money, and looked at it with the same indifference. Then he said in a low voice: "Sister, give me fifty kopecks' worth of bread."

Seeing my expression change, and not understanding why, he added:

"I don't ask much. Only a little bit. I want to taste new bread: I haven't had any for so long."

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"Give me some bread, please," I said to the housekeeper. "I want to give some to this man."

And I gave him a loaf.

"Take it, my friend. We do not sell. We just give."

Suddenly another soldier appeared in front of me. He was quite an old man, and looked like a Tartar. He offered me a handful of coppers.

"Bread! a little bit of bread, please!" he cried.

I gave him a piece without a word; the engine whistled, and our train began to move.

"Good-bye!" said the officers. "You must get away quickly. It is dangerous to stay here. The attack is going to begin soon."

"Good-bye, little Sisters!" shouted the soldiers. "We are off, too, in a little while. It's a pity we haven't had time to boil our potatoes with your salt."

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I looked at them and was amazed. Were these the same men who had crowded round us a few minutes ago, worn out, and thinking only of bread? The time had come for them to go out to face the enemy, and courage and resolution had returned to them. What is one to think of them? Are they what are called heroes?

The train gathered speed, and soon we were once more in the station at Op——. As I left my *tieploushka*, I saw our little Christmas-tree. We had forgotten it when we set out for the trenches.

That same evening casualties were brought in from the very trenches which we had visited. Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought I could recognize some of the soldiers to whom I had given bread.

There were many casualties, and there was plenty to do. I was dressing wounds until three in the morning, and hardly was

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the job finished than a new lot of patients was brought in.

So far I had nearly always had to tend the wounded who have been tended at the field dressing-station. But this time we had men sent straight from the field of battle without any previous medical attention.

Most of them had had no dressing at all. Some had been bandaged up by themselves, or their comrades. Their wounds were horrible to look upon. They were very different from wounds as seen in hospital, where they have passed through several stages and have had several dressings. These wounds were full of blood and mud; and fragments of cloth were clotted up with the coagulated blood.

"Why is there so much mud in your wound and on your hands?" I asked one man, whose hands were crusted with dried mud.

"We advanced against the Germans,

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Sister. Then we began to dig ourselves in. But I had lost my spade, and as the earth had thawed I dug with my hands. I knew I could not do much, but I worked away, and it was just then that I was wounded."

"Sister! Sister!" one man cried, "it was your train that we saw yesterday. Our company was on the other side of the railway. It was splendid to see an engine; we hadn't seen one for a long time. Trains never come up to us as a rule."

"Sister!" began another, "when you went away our company was in the very trenches you visited. In the evening we began an attack, and I was wounded."

The men were very excited. They all wanted to talk, and to help us to share their emotions.

I listened attentively, and encouraged them as I dressed their wounds.

It was strange to have these men, who had gone to the war, who had endured cold

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and privation in doing their duty, lying there, as weak as children, patiently awaiting a nurse's care. Never, as I worked all day and all night, did I hear a single groan, a single cry; but there were several men who, with their heads pressed hard against the wall, lost consciousness, and sank down on to the floor.

The next day was just as busy. Fresh batches of casualties arrived. About noon, all the cars were full. We had to go, but the wounded were still pouring in. The ambulance station of the district, hearing of the arrival of a hospital-train, sent us their wounded in shoals. I knew that, a few hours later, another hospital-train would continue the work, but it was painful to me to leave the men there, even for a few hours.

I went into the station. The rooms were full of wounded. There were some Austrians among our men, who surrounded me, and we talked. They begged me to ask

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the Austrians where they came from, and whether they had wives and children and mothers, and if their wives wept when they said good-bye to them.

I put all these questions punctiliously to the Austrians, and translated their replies.

"Well! well! So he has a wife," said our men, pointing to an Austrian. "He has three children, and his wife wept when he went away to the war! Just like us," they said sympathetically.

"Why not?" someone added. "It is not of their own will that these poor devils have gone to the war. They have been sent there, just like us."

The simple kindly attitude of our soldiers towards the enemy troubled me. When I was at Moscow, among civilians, I felt a kind of hatred for them. Our soldiers have given me, an "intellectual," a lesson. They have reminded me that I am only a "sister of charity."

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IV

THE FIRST DRESSINGS—THE WOUNDED POUR IN—THE MAGYAR'S TALENT—SWEETS

ALL the staff is at work in the dressing-car. We have made everything ready for applying bandages, and then we shall go into the carriages among the wounded. We have to examine all the wounds, to separate those who are seriously wounded from the slightly wounded, and to find out if the dressing must be renewed every day, or every other day.

I do my work quickly, with the assistance of a nurse. We chat pleasantly to divert the attention of the men from their wounds; we gently apply the bandages and manage to create a kindly atmosphere.

"We must dress the enemy now," said I.

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"What enemy, Sister? They have no arms," our men said reproachfully.

One of the "enemy" is a Magyar, who understands neither French nor German nor Polish. Our men have an extraordinary sympathy for him. They buy him tobacco, roll him cigarettes, give him bread. One of them even changed him an Austrian two kronen note for fifty kopecks.

"I'll keep this note in memory of the enemy," he explained.

As I had called them "the enemy" the name stuck. But it does not keep our men from treating them kindly.

Next morning, when I went into the carriage to change the dressings, the men called out:

"Sister, our Magyar enemy gave us a show yesterday. Oh, how we laughed! We couldn't sleep until two in the morning. He showed us how the Russians fire, how 'they' hide away from 'us' in the trenches,

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and how the Russians cheer, and 'they' surrender, and put up their handkerchiefs for a white flag, and go white with terror."

"But — wait a moment," I broke in. "How could you understand him, since he can speak neither Russian nor Polish?"

"He did it all with gestures, and made a terrified face. We understood it all. It was so funny!"

I looked at "the enemy." He was sitting up in his bed, in the top berth, looking down at me like an eagle, feeling that we were talking about him.

One of the men said: "Sister, he is married, and has a baby a year old."

But what pleased me most was the interview which our men arranged between the Magyar and another Austrian prisoner in the next carriage. I was in this carriage dressing. The orderlies had gone to dinner.

Suddenly the door opened, and our Magyar came in in a dressing-gown (in our train all the men change their clothes), with nothing

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on his head. Another man, a Russian, was with him.

"We brought him in here, Sister, to see his comrade. For there's another 'enemy' here."

The men in the carriage joined in heartily in the interview between the two prisoners, and set about waking the Austrian.

"Get up! get up!" they cried. "Here's a countryman of yours."

Our men were more excited than the Magyar himself. They roused the German, but he was still half asleep, and did not understand what it was all about. I did not interfere, although the Austrian understood German a little. At last all was well: the two "enemies" smiled and looked at each other happily.

"Well, thank God they are together," said our men, delighted.

But their joy did not last long. The orderly came from the next carriage and took the Magyar back.

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"The medical officer will haul me over the coals. You are not allowed to wander about the train."

One day, as I was returning to my compartment after work, I was stopped by the men in one of the carriages.

"Sister, there is a wounded 'Guerman' here. Will you ask him if he is happy in Russia? Ask him if he has a wife and children."

"Our men want to know if you are happy in Russia."

"Not bad. But what hurts me is to think that I shan't spend Christmas with my family. But the Russians are not bad."

After a moment's silence he added:

"It is war that makes men bad."

He turned to the wall as though he were unwilling to go on with the conversation.

I translated the "Guerman's" words to our men.

"I don't wonder. He's right. Having

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to spend a great feast like Christmas among his enemies!" said the men.

We had to unload the train at M——, and leave the wounded there. We were rushed, for the men had to be handed over to the hospital authorities in a perfectly clean condition. At last it was over. I went through the carriages for the last time, giving a piece of cotton to one soldier, and putting another's arm in a sling.

The train slowed down, and we reached M——.

"Here we are, Sister! I wish you every happiness! I would gladly travel three thousand versts with you, Sister. Thank you! Thank you very much!"

That was the kind of thing I heard on all sides.

I thanked my patients for their good wishes and ran towards the *tieploushki* containing the men who could not walk. They were quickly removed, and the train was

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then empty. I went to the "clearing-house" to see my patients. I was told that they were at supper. I went into the dining-room, an enormous lofty barrack with three rows of tables. There was a whole herd of soldiers sitting at them, and I could not recognize my men. But a voice came from a corner of the room:

"Here's the Sister who looked after us in the train! Here's our Sister!"

I looked across and saw "my men" smiling a welcome to me. There were some ladies with them—society "benefactresses" dressed in a mixture of their ordinary clothes and the uniform of the Sisters of Charity, with their bosoms adorned with medallions and figures.

"That's our Sister!" my patients explained.

"Oh, indeed! Yes, yes!" said one of the ladies in a patronizing tone. "It is a good thing there are kind nurses on the train."

I don't know why, but I felt a certain

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feeling of irritation against these ladies and all their kind.

My men gave me food. They offered me soup and *kasha*, and asked me where they were to be taken to. Just as I was going, one of the soldiers held me out a sweet.

"You eat that, Sister. A lady gave me three sweets just now. I ate one myself, I gave another to my pal, and the third is for you. Please eat it, Sister. If I had known you were coming, I would have kept them all for you."

He unwrapped the paper and produced a caramel.

I know it is stupid to be so "sentimental," but when I saw the bearded peasant holding out his horny hand with his "third" sweet, like a child wanting to share his pleasure with his mother, I was overcome with emotion.

"Eat it yourself, my man. You have come back from the trenches, where you haven't seen a sweet for a long time."

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But he looked at me with such a pleading expression that I could not refuse.

"Thank you. I won't eat it, but I'll keep it as a souvenir of you."

"Sister, will you go and see the enemy, too? They are in the next room to this."

I went to see the "enemy" and found my Magyar sitting on a bed with another prisoner. It was a great big room, and there were many "enemies" in it, but they were huddled together in a corner like a herd of cattle in a storm without a shepherd. When they saw me, the "enemy" who had travelled in my train came up to me. I was much astonished to find among them the "Guerman" who had refused to talk to me in the train.

"Allow me to introduce this gentleman, Sister," he said, pointing to another prisoner with a bandaged arm. "He is a German, too," he added, with a certain pride.

"I am very glad to make your acquaint-

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ance, sir. Perhaps I may be of some use to you as an interpreter. Would you like me to ask the Sisters here for anything? I will translate anything you may ask."

"No, thank you. But, if possible, will you give these to the authorities."

He handed me two letters.

I gave them to the Russian officers.

We shook hands cordially. My Magyar said something in his own language and smiled pleasantly, but I could not understand a word.

The carriages in our train are empty now. I am bored. I had grown really fond of my patients on the six days' journey. What kind of men are they? I don't know—I don't even know their names. We shall never meet again probably, but what attracted me in them was the gentleness of their souls. Beneath the thick crust of their coarseness there is a treasure of kindliness such as is never found in the Germans, in

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spite of the superiority of their external culture.

And the simple natural kindness with which our soldiers treated their "enemy" prisoners! I remember our men saying:

"When a man is disarmed he is not an enemy!"

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V

REST—THE POLISH GIRL'S STORY—THE GERMANS AND A FOWL

OUR comparative inactivity came to an end by the middle of January. Our train was sent to Ost—— to collect sick and wounded.

Once more we had to go through Iv—— and Sk——.

At Sk—— we resumed our normal life. The station, which I had seen burned down on my last journey, was being rebuilt. The holes in the platform had been covered with planks; the heaps of fallen bricks had been taken away. The people had returned to their homes, or what was left of them, and looked as though they had never left the scene of devastation. Near the station tents of poles and canvas had been put up. They

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were encamped in two rows. In each there was a table and a couple of chairs, and on the table a *samovar*, cups, *baranki*, etc.

Two versts away from the station was a village. I went up to it. Two Polish peasant women welcomed me to their home, which was on the outskirts. One of them was quite young, the other fairly old. I asked them for their experiences during the German occupation. Were they afraid?

"Were we afraid? No. We were alone in the house. Mother and the children had gone before the Germans arrived. My sister and I stayed to look after the house. It could not be left to look after itself," said the elder. "The Germans imposed their rules on us. We had to be in bed by eight, and after eight the windows must not be lit up. We stopped them up with cushions to prevent any light being seen. All night long the streets were patrolled. Almost every evening the soldiers knocked at the door to ask for something to eat. When

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we understood them, we gave what we had. When we did not understand they looked for what they wanted themselves. One night they came to me and said: "*Huhn!*" I understood that they were asking for a fowl, but I had only two, and I took pity on my fowls. I pretended that I did not understand. . . . I showed them bread, sugar. . . . Then one German took a candle, went into the yard, found the fowls and took one. Oh! I felt so sorry for the fowl!"

"Did they pay compensation?"

"Not always. He gave me three pieces of nickel for the fowl. What could I do with them? They're no good for anything. They gave other people receipts."

After some silence she went on:

"They wanted to take one man's horse. He clung to it and would not let it go. They gave him a knock on the head. . . . He died. . . ."

She told me the story in a curiously deliberate and reserved tone, which at first

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astonished me. Then I understood. Their village had become a field of battle, which changed masters with the fortunes of war. The day before yesterday, it belonged to the Russian Empire. Yesterday the Germans were in possession, to-day the Russians hold it once more. . . . What will the future bring to these poor peasants? They do not know. But they do know that it is well to be prudent. . . .

The inside of the house was so clean and so well kept that there was the most striking difference between the peaceful dwelling and the chaos which still prevailed at the station. Four childish faces peered out of the next room.

"When did the children return?"

"When? as soon as the Germans had gone."

"And when did they set fire to the station?"

"During their retreat. They only set fire to the Government buildings here. They

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also blew up the railway. Our windows were nearly smashed by the first explosion."

When I left the two women it was snowing. By the time I reached the station, the village was no longer visible through the thick curtain of snowflakes dancing on the darkened air.

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VI

A RUSSIAN SONG—AT BREST-LITOVSK—A WOMAN-SOLDIER—A LIBRARY IN THE TRAIN—AN AVIATOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO—THE DRESSING-STATION

THE fourth-class carriage is full of slightly wounded men.

A soldier is singing:

"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your forefathers now?
Our forefathers are glory and victory:
Lo! where our forefathers are.

"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your mothers now?
Our mothers are the tents so white:
Lo! where our mothers are.

"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your brothers now?
Our brothers are the sacks on our backs:
Lo! where our brothers are.

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"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your sisters now?
Our sisters are our swords so sharp:
Lo! where our sisters are.

"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your dear wives now?
Our wives are our loaded rifles here:
Lo! where our dear wives are.

"Soldiers, soldiers, brave soldier lads,
Where are your children now?
Our children are our bullets swift:
Lo! where our children fly."

The train rolls on. The song dies away. Its rhythm is a strange mixture of martial gaiety and human sadness.

We have reached Brest-Litovsk. Midnight. The great station is full of men and movement. Everywhere the soldiers in their grey *shineli* are waiting for the time to go.

"Where are you going?"

"To L——."

"And then?"

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"Then? No one knows. To face the Germans!"

I left the third-class waiting-room. By the first-class waiting-room, in a corner, I saw a tall *Kiote* framing icons. Before the eyes of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and the saints flows the great stream of soldiers of all races and religions—Orthodox, Catholic, Mussulman, Israelite—who make up the Russian Army, and are passing through on their way to the war, to death. . . .

A young soldier went up to the *Kiote* and threw a copper coin into the box he had set out, and took a little candle. He looked closely at the *Kiote* for a long time as though he were expecting someone. At last, he lit his candle—placed it in front of one of the saints, knelt and prayed for a long time—a very long time. For whom? For his kinsfolk? For himself? Did he pray to God to end the sufferings of the world which had become his own? He will remain as he was when I saw him rise, with a look of calm

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satisfaction on his face. His prayer had given him what he asked. . . .

After a day's halt at Brest, we went to O—— to pick up casualties, for there had been some bloody fighting.

During the journey from Brest to O—— at every station we were boarded by temporary passengers—officers, priests, various functionaries. A lady appeared before us: she was clad in a soldier's uniform and wore a *papakha* on her head: she was wounded, and hobbled up on crutches. She showed us a paper signed by the Commandant of the station authorizing her to travel in our train. I had a vacant place in my compartment, and I offered it to her. She lay down on the seat and we talked.

She told me that at the beginning of the war she left her two children to go with her husband, an Army doctor, and her brother, a captain. Disguised as a soldier, she worked as an orderly in the trenches. The soldiers

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did not know that the orderly was a woman, and thought she was their captain's "little brother." In attack she ran along the lines with her brother's orders; and when the action was over she attended the wounded. . . . All three, her husband and herself, were wounded by a shrapnel shell. Her brother had his leg amputated. Her husband was gravely wounded and left on the field, where he was picked up by the Germans, and she had the toes of her left foot crushed.

"But only one thing distresses me," she said. "Part of the regiment was surrounded by the Germans, and had to surrender without firing a shot. . . . Do you understand —without firing a shot!"

Her eyes glowed. I listened eagerly, scanning her delicate features, her fine grey eyes, her short-cropped curly hair, and I could see her vividly as the captain's "little brother" running along the trenches with orders.

We were silent for some minutes. I broke

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the silence by asking her where her children were.

"I left them in the country with my mother. I am going to X—— (a town in Poland), to get rid of my flat and furniture. I don't know when we shall return, or if we ever shall. It is better to get rid of everything.'

We reached X—— late at night. I helped her out on to the platform and called a cab. We said good-bye and I kissed her. She made me promise to call on her at Moscow, at the hospital where she was going to complete her cure, which had been interrupted by her journey.

For a long time I had been wanting to have a small library on our train to distract the patients by reading to them during our long and exhausting journeys from one "clearing-station" to another.

But it is rather a difficult matter to get together a library on a hospital-train. In the

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official hospital libraries only books on the list of non-subversive works, compiled and approved by the Ministry, are admitted.

I made use of my short stay in Moscow to apply to a committee devoted entirely to forming libraries for wounded soldiers, and I was sent a collection of books and papers. I have installed them in my compartment, and now I have—more or less—something that I can give the soldiers to read.

When I have cleaned and dressed their wounds, I take up a paper and read to my patients "how men have learned to fly." We learned from this paper that one of the first to think of flying was a Russian moujik in the sixteenth century. He "boasted" that he could make "wings of mica" and could fly with them. Tsar Ivan the Terrible was interested in the invention, and ordered the man to prove to the public that he was not lying. When the day of trial came, and the poor moujik could not rise on his mica wings, the Tsar gave orders that he should have his

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nose burned ; then that he should be whipped with the knout and deported.

My men listen to this sad story, pity the lot of the unhappy aviator, but are glad to think that one of "them" was thinking of aviation three hundred years ago.

Sometimes I recite the poetry I learned at school, and have never forgotten.

They particularly like this, by Nekrassov:

"When I hear of the horrors of war,
And see the afflicted mourn,
Neither friend nor wife, nor the hero,
Can make me feel forlorn.

"Alas! a woman's consoled.
The best friend forgets his friend,
But there is yet one soul in the world
That remembers still to the end.

"In all our canting affairs,
Glib talk and commonplace gear,
I know one kind of grief
That is sacred and sincere.

"And that is the grief of the mothers.
They cannot forget their sons,
Gone down in the harvest of blood,

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No more than a weeping willow can raise
Its branches bent down to the earth."

"Who *composed* that?" asked one of the audience.

"Nekrassov. A well-known poet."

"He is a good *composer*. He speaks the truth. The mothers grieve most for those who fall in the war. Say it over again."

And I begin:

"When I hear of the horrors of war . . ."

There was a pitch-black night outside when we reached R——. The chief surgeon of the "clearing-station" came in:

"There are a lot of serious cases. You must economize your space. Keep plenty of room for serious cases. Four *tieploushki* will be uncoupled from your train, and sent with your nurses to positions seven versts behind the firing line. The wounded are to be picked up there."

The *tieploushki* were quickly uncoupled,

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and we set out. We had a doctor and ten orderlies with us.

It was two o'clock. A dark night. On the inky horizon there flashed every second a reddish-white flame like summer lightning. It flared up, lit up the sky, and then one heard the booming of the guns.

It was the artillery at work.

We passed through a wood, and the plain stretched out before us.

The flare of the guns seen across the bare plain gave one a far more vivid impression than when it appeared above the tops of the trees. Against a blood-red background, there would suddenly flash a silver thread, at the end of which there shone for an instant a light like that of an electric arc.

Once more we plunged into the woods. Our journey would soon be over. A shrill whistle reached our ears through the woods. The engine stopped.

The booming of the guns came nearer. The battle was raging on our right, and we

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got down from the train on the left of the wood. We went forward through the trees with lanterns.

The woods were under the spell of a silence broken only by the guns. The woods seemed to be lost in a drowsy torpor. There was darkness everywhere around us. But suddenly on every side little jets of flame shone out like glow-worms: it was our orderlies with their lanterns. They were bringing the wounded to our train. We helped them to lay their burdens on the beds, while the men "who could walk" came up silently, and in silence sat down near the train, as though they were yielding first place to their more seriously wounded comrades.

The orderlies lit a fire of dried branches. The flames leaped up, lighting up the men huddled together with arms and heads bandaged, faces mortally pale, *shineli* soaked with blood, and the rows of stretchers laden with motionless bodies.

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A wounded man was brought up to me. His face was hidden in bandages—only his mouth was uncovered. I took hold of his hand. It was cold. I felt his pulse, which was difficult to detect.

"Leave him, Sister," said the doctor. "Don't bother about him. Have him laid on a bed. It is not likely that you will get him alive to R——."

But I ran to another Sister, and begged her to give him an injection of camphor, and to put him between warm blankets: I thought he was suffering from the cold.

"There are no more men on the stretchers," said the doctor. "You can bring in all those who can walk."

And "those who could walk" dragged themselves painfully towards the steps, and climbed up them even more painfully. A few minutes later we set out for R——.

At R—— another goods train was waiting for us full of wounded, who had to be transferred to our train. The transfer took the

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whole night. All were serious cases. None of them "could walk."

The night attack had cost us dear.

But the very fact that we have so many serious cases is reassuring: it means clearly that our men are not giving way, for it is impossible to pick up serious cases during a retreat. So the battle is going well for us: that is some consolation. . . .

A few of the men brought back to us died in the train. As I was passing through one of the cars, I saw a soldier in a strange attitude, on his hands and knees on the floor, with his face in the dust.

"Doctor, let us begin with this man; he is behaving so extraordinarily," I said to our assistant surgeon. But he is as obstinate as the Caucasian he is. And he deliberately does the exact opposite of what I want him to do.

"Why this man? We must take them in their proper order."

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So we took them in order. Before we got to the man, I had to have thirty others carried away. When at last I tried to raise the man, who was still kneeling in the middle of the car, I saw that he was dead. His hands and feet were cold.

After we had arranged them all, we began to dress a new lot of patients. Fractures, horrible wounds, hemorrhages. . . . The work was going on quickly and well, but my doctor is too fond of taking things in their proper order. I had two men in an extremely critical condition in one of my cars. I begged the doctor to give me permission to leave them at a station on the way, at M—— or P——, where there are good hospitals. I was afraid they could not bear the long journey to the town marked down as the *terminus* of our present expedition.

"I know better than you who ought to be left at M—— or P——," he replied.

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"But you haven't even examined them. They need a careful examination."

My doctor would not budge.

I went back to the *tieploushka* to see my two cases. Their bandages were soaked through. I added others.

"They must not die!" was the only thought in my mind.

Next day, at five o'clock in the morning, an orderly woke me up.

"The man whom you asked the doctor to leave at P—— is groaning, and begging to have his dressing changed. His temperature is 38·8. He hasn't slept all night."

I jumped out of my berth, woke the doctor and another Sister. We gave the man a new dressing, but it did not relieve him. His leg was going bluer and bluer. . . .

I thought that if we did not leave him at a hospital to be operated on, he would be lost: and the idea tortured me.

I sat on the man's bed. He tossed about and asked me if he would live.

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"You know, Sister, I used to live in the country. Just before the war, I built me a new house. We were so proud of it, my wife and I! I went to work in the town to earn money to pay for it. I was working away quietly. And suddenly I was told that war was declared. My employer said: 'They will take you for the army.' 'Why?' I asked. 'I want to work. I have just built a new house.' My employer said: 'You'd better go home and see your wife, and say good-bye.' That was how I heard that everyone was to be taken for the war. Me too. I went straight back to my village without a word to anybody. I got home and said to my wife: 'Good-bye, my dear, I am going to my death.' She wept, and so did I. We both wept. Then I got up and said: 'Oh, well. That's enough!' And I went back to the town. And I haven't seen my wife since."

"What province do you come from?"

"Tchernigov."

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When we reached G——, I applied direct to the chief medical officer of the "dressing-station," and without waiting for the authority of my own doctor, begged him to take charge of my two cases. He readily consented. While I was talking to him, an assistant gave orders for all the men in our train to be transferred to another train, which was waiting for them to take them farther up the line. "No one is to stay in the dressing-station," he said. But my two cases were already in the ward.

"They must both stay here," said the surgeon, after his examination.

"You'll have your leg taken off, my man," he said to one of my patients, "or it will be too late. We'll send the other to the town—to the Red Cross Hospital. He is in the same condition," he said to one of the nurses who was helping him.

Twenty minutes later I saw my man laid out on an operating-table and chloroformed.

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He went off, and the doctor put an end to his anguish.

My doctor will not be pleased with me, in all probability; I had acted with authority and in contravention of "orders." But what of it? If subordination is a good thing, so is human life.

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VII

THE BATH-TRAIN—ON THE ROAD TO WARSAW—AN IMPROVISATION—THE TWO CROSSES—THE WOMEN-SOLDIERS

THE little town to which we have come for patients is situated in the middle of a pine-wood. The air is fresh and clear.

We have filled the train with serious cases lying on litters. We are hard at work. We have cleared the beds out of the carriages, have laid our men in them, and are taking them up-country.

Their boots, *shineli*, and trousers are covered with mud and clay. Their uniforms and skins looked as though they had been well tarred. They are so dirty.

"Why are you so covered with mud and earth?" I asked one of the dirtiest of the men.

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"How can it be otherwise?" he answered. "We had four days and four nights lying on our bellies in the marshes. We have been marching through marshy country for the last two weeks."

A wide smile suddenly spread over his face as he added:

"But it wasn't for nothing that we grovelled in the mud. We beat the Germans; they retired."

"Where?"

"By Pr——."

The train was loaded. We could take a rest. An officer came to see us; he was the Commandant of the bath-train lying alongside ours. He thanked us for our work, which he had "contemplated" (his own word) with his comrades, and he invited us to go and see his apparatus. We went over after dinner.

The Commandant of the bath-train gave us a warm welcome. He offered us tea and

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"Moscow cakes." He told us of his doings on the day before. A hospital-train stopped next to his. He "contemplated" that, too, and noticed that nobody was looking after the transfer of the wounded; no doctor—no nurse.

"I made inquiries," he said, "and I found a nurse and told her that the orderlies ought not to be allowed to work without someone in charge. She was annoyed, and a doctor jumped down from a carriage and shouted: 'How dare you be so rude to Nurse Z——?' Then it was explained that the lady was a very important personage. But how was I to know that? All nurses are the same to me. An important personage! If she does her work well, I am at her feet. If not . . ."

After tea the Commandant showed us over his train. It was really a sight. There was a bath-room, with an ante-room, in which to leave one's clothes. Then there was a hair-dressing-room, a linen-room, where clean

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linen was exchanged for dirty. The bath-room was arranged Russian fashion, with wide seats for the patrons, *shaiki* (wooden seats), clouts, pieces of soap. Then we passed on to a laundry car, where clothes were washed, wrung and dried by machinery. Farther on we came to the store, with the linen all laid out on shelves.

"And this," said the Commandant, "is a disin*s*ection-room."

"Disinfection, you mean?"

"No—disin*s*ection. To destroy William's friends."

"What friends?"

"Insects, vermin. They are the scourge of the Army. They help William. We fight them here with a great deal of success. We put the soldiers' clothes and *shineli* in here, and bring the temperature up to 94 degrees. They can bear 60 degrees or 70 degrees. They begin to crack at 80 degrees, and at 90 degrees they are all done for."

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We thanked our charming host and hurried away to our train. A few minutes later we were rolling towards Warsaw.

I stayed in one of the *tieploushki*, having to draw up a list of the wounded there and to find out when their wounds were last dressed.

There was a German there. When I wrote the names down on my list, he lay flat on his bed, with his face in his hands, sobbing.

"Tell me your name," I said in German.

"Franz L——."

"Sister," our men asked, "why is he sobbing? Tell him there is nothing for him to take on so about. He hasn't been killed. After the war he will be able to go home. Is he married? Has he a wife and children? Ask him, Sister. Comfort him."

I translated their words to Franz L——. But he looked at me suspiciously.

"Listen. The Russians are not bad people. What are you afraid of?"

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"I say, Sister," said one of the men, "he was in the next bed to me in hospital. When they put us in the train the German went pale and began to cry. Probably he thought we were going to kill him. They must have stuffed his head with nonsense about us in Germany. That is why he is afraid."

I distributed cigarettes among the soldiers.

"Sister, give the German one," said the others.

I obeyed gladly. The German thanked me, and was a little reassured.

About midnight we reached Warsaw. Our train stopped on a siding. Next morning we had orders to leave our ten serious Russian cases and all our prisoners at Warsaw.

I went to Franz L—— and told him he was to be left at Warsaw. The news upset him, and he looked at me fearfully.

"Sister," said the others, "ask the doctor to leave the German with us. He's a good

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fellow, the German. We know him. We are very fond of him. Speak to the doctor, Sister."

"The doctor has no right to keep a man in the train if orders are that he is to be left at Warsaw. It depends on the military authorities."

But I was touched by their request.

I told the German that he would be transferred to the hospital at Warsaw, where there were many of his fellow-countrymen, prisoners like himself: and he would have nothing to worry over then.

The German believed me at last:

"Good. I was afraid of being sent to Siberia. It is cold there, and our people die."

I laughed:

"But how do you think we Russians manage to live in Siberia without dying? All the same, you may be easy on that score. You won't be sent to Siberia before you are quite well again."

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On the evening of the same day we left Warsaw for Moscow with a heavy load of serious cases: 370 out of 480 could not move from their beds.

The journeys from one station to another were sometimes very long, and I had to stay for hours together in the same *tieploushka.* I soon finished all the dressings, and then I used to sit on one of the beds and talk to the patients.

One of them had been wounded for the second time, another for the third time. Their old wounds still reminded them of their existence. The new ones increased the pain they gave, and the men were depressed by this.

"Don't worry so much," I said, trying to comfort them. "You will get better, you will go home, and you will be given the Order of St. George. You have earned it. It is something to have been wounded thrice in the same war."

"No, Sister," said one of the men with a

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grave face, "I shan't get the cross you speak of—I shall soon have one—but another kind—a big wooden cross."

He was right. It was death rather than recovery that lay before him. But how could I tell him? You cannot tell the truth to these dangerously wounded men, who are worn out as well. But I felt that I ought to tell them something, and I talked to them, not about themselves, for whom there was little hope left, but of the cause for which they were suffering. With an aching heart I told them that war was the most terrible of evils, but that since it has taken possession of the whole world, no one can escape from it. It was not our country that willed this war. Germany provoked it. Germany had crushed little Belgium, and held part of France, and had invaded Poland. The Germans burn villages, and take away the inhabitants, and force them to work as slaves. Little children are left without support, and die of hunger. We must break

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the pride and the domination of the Germans. If we do not do it we shall suffer even more than we do now. Our children will have to pay tribute and to work for the enrichment of Germany, which is already a hundred times as rich as our country. We must have courage and faith in ourselves.

So I ended my improvisation. It was the first speech I had ever made in favour of the war. It seemed to me that all I had said was useless and out of place, and that the personal sufferings of these men could not be relieved by words. It seemed to me cruel on my part to talk so to men who knew better than I what war is.

But, strange to say, when the train stopped, and I left the carriage, the men called after me fervently:

"Thank you, Sister! You have put a good heart into us again. Thank you, dear Sister."

A little later the orderly called me into the *tieploushka*. The man who had been

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wounded three times had a violent rise of temperature. I examined him and removed his dressing. His wound was very small, and did not look very bad. But what was happening internally? I could make nothing of it. The doctor was summoned, and he made a fresh examination of the man.

All night long he was haunted with bad dreams. In his delirium he fought the Germans, shouted, leaped from his bed, and hurled himself at his neighbours; the orderlies kept him back: he took them for enemies.

Another day passed. Towards evening the man was quieter, but his temperature still went up. The next morning the orderly came to me:

"He's dying."

I ran to the *tieploushka.* I felt the man's pulse, but it was tangibly fading away, and his hand grew cold in mine.

An injection of camphor. . . . No result.

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The soldier will have his cross—a big wooden cross. . . .

On the way to K—— our train crawled along like a tortoise. We were told that there were enormous numbers of casualties at K——. Yet we stopped every minute. All the lines were full, and we had to let the troop-trains pass, for they were carrying soldiers along the fighting line.

Quite near K—— at a little station, we saw some soldiers who had just arrived drawn up opposite our carriage. They were inspected, and then sent off to the trenches.

We watched them through the windows. Among them we saw four women in military uniform. One was a pretty girl about eighteen. Two were about twenty-five, and the fourth looked like a suffragette, which made it difficult to tell her age. They were volunteers.

While they were waiting for the officers,

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the soldiers fraternized with their strange comrades.

"Have a drink?" one of the soldiers asked one of the volunteers. And he held up his tea-can by the bowl, while she drank out of the spout. Another soldier came up and gave one of them a *kalatsh*, another a sausage, and the third some cigarettes.

The word of command was given. The soldiers marched off, and the four comrades with them. They marched like real soldiers: their gait was undistinguishable from that of the men, although one of them was really a "young lady."

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VIII

ON THE BANKS OF THE SAN—HERE LIES ——

FROM five o'clock in the morning on, we have been busy dressing. We began with the seven goods waggons. The men were laid on straw, close packed in rows: forty men to a waggon.

"Where were you wounded?" I asked a man whose face was buried in the straw.

He did not reply.

"I say," said the next man, "they are asking you where you are hurt."

He did not reply.

I touched his hand. It was cold.

"We mustn't stir him. He will never wake again!" said I.

"Is he dead?" asked the next man. And gradually the others drew away from the

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body as much as the confined space would allow.

What were his thoughts as he lay dying? Of his native province, no doubt, like the last man. . . .

The dead man's lips were tightly pressed together. His expression revealed signs of a huge effort. Plainly he had been suppressing his groans.

I covered his face with a cap and went on to the others.

So we examined the wounded in all the goods waggons. In almost every one there was a dead or dying man who, the day before, when they were entrained, had been classed among "those who could walk."

Four men died in the *tieploushki* during the night. At the first station, the bodies were passed out, and I chose the worst cases from among the men lying on the floor for the four vacant beds. My experience told me that those who are in the worst con-

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dition never cry out: they just lie still and helpless.

I tried to pick them out by their expressions.

"Where is your wound? You are in great pain, aren't you?" I said to one soldier.

"It's nothing. I'm trying to be patient, Sister," he said with difficulty.

His face seemed calm, but there was so much suffering in his expression. I raised his shirt, and found the bandages round his back and one of his thighs red with blood.

"We'll give him a bed," I said to the orderlies.

When the man was laid on a bed, and I had renewed his dressing, I found that he was terribly wounded, deep gashes with ragged blue edges.

How he must have suffered! But he never uttered a moan. Where do they get such a power of patience and resignation?

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At the end of May we once more reached the banks of the San, the San where every inch of soil is drenched with human blood.

Our train stopped. We seized the opportunity to get out. We crossed the bridge and walked to the left along the riverside. There were woods all around us. Every five or ten minutes we came across trenches, some made like a ditch, others like a tunnel. We walked over broken fragments of shrapnel, and Austrian uniforms in rags; the sleeve of a blue tunic: and a tunic without sleeves—Austrian boots with the soles heavily nailed, military knapsacks of yellow leather. . . .

And the forest. . . . The forest is still standing, but melancholy and wounded! Many a broken pine, already dead, had fallen with its trunk and withered branches against its neighbour. Sometimes one would find a tree mutilated and half-dead, with the rest green and healthy. The tops of the pines waved sorrowfully in the wind.

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"It is a common grave of the Austrians," said the Captain who was in charge of us, breaking in on our meditations.

We saw a little mound covered with an Austrian képi. . . . The trees sighed softly and incessantly with the wind in their withered branches. . . . We could feel the presence of death in our midst. In silence we passed out of the forest and went along the high bank of the San, whose waters went racing along below us.

"There are heaps of arms lying at the bottom of the river. The Russians, who attacked from the other side, and the Austrians, who were entrenched along this side, paid the river the same tribute," said the Captain. "A few days ago our doctor was bathing here and had his foot cut with an Austrian bayonet, as though, even after it had been thrown away, it went on fighting. . . . Our soldiers fish up quantities of arms when they bathe. Every now and then corpses float by on the stream. Orders were

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given to pull them out of the water and bury them."

"Yonder are the common graves of our soldiers," he said, pointing to the other bank, where we could see the white crosses stuck in the earth.

While my companions rested on the grass I went over to the graves of the Russian soldiers. They were surrounded with a wooden fence. There were five or six graves with a big white cross above each. The inscription ran:

"*Here rest the soldiers of the —— Regiment who fell bravely in crossing the San in face of rifle-fire, machine-guns, and heavy artillery on the —— October*, 1914."

On two crosses names were written, and these words in pencil: "*And four more soldiers.*"

Not far away, in the middle of a field, under a willow, was another cross, the same size as the others. I picked my way across

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the field, for it had been ploughed. Only after a long search did I succeed in making out these words, scribbled in pencil on one of the arms of the cross: "Died on the night of the —— October, 1914."

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IX

THE LAST LETTER—THE WOMEN WHO ARE LEFT—THE REAL SIBERIA—MOSCOW

WE left all the men in the goods-trucks and those on the floor of the *tieploushki* at Brest, and we were left with our proper complement of cases as provided in the rules according to capacity.

In one of my *tieploushki* I had a man who was wounded in the chest. His wound was not very big or very serious, but his condition was distressing, for he could only talk with difficulty, and he kept spitting blood. We decided to leave him at Brest, too. But he died as he was being carried off on a stretcher. The orderly who was looking after him could not remember his name, nor could the doctor. But the man in the next bed came to our aid:

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"Sister, four men have been taken from our carriage. I know them all. Let me see the dead man. I'll be able to recognize him and to tell you his name."

I agreed. The hospital was quite near. We slowly helped our patient along to identify his comrade, and he gave us his name at once.

"I never thought he would have died," he said, shaking his head pensively. "I should never have thought it."

When I reached the train again, I saw through the long list of cases which had been transferred. I found the dead man's name, and made a mark against it. His relations will not be left in ignorance of his fate. They will hear the sad news, but they will at least know, and they will not spend days and months in a vain anguish of suspense. They will know. . . .

"Why trouble about it?" one of the nurses asked me ironically.

The question hurt me, but I restrained

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myself, and answered as quietly as I could: "I wanted to let his people know."

"My God!" she said. "How sentimental you are!"

I could not answer: perhaps she is right.

We left the other cases at M——, and returned at once to K——, where we had to take men from the hospitals. But, in addition to the men in hospital at K——, we were brought men who had come straight from the firing line, both Russians and Austrians.

My trucks were filled almost exclusively with Austrians.

While they were being carried to the *tieploushki* I began to attend to my new patients in a car that had already been filled.

There was an Austrian who had four wounds: in both arms, head, and chest. I dressed them carefully, and went on to another and another. I bathed their wounds

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and bound them up. I tried to do my work as gently as possible, so as not to hurt the "enemy." The Austrians were quite amazed. Probably their leaders had held out the prospect of torture in Russia.

"Sister, you are like my wife to look at."

"So you are married? Have you a portrait of your wife? Will you show it me?"

The Austrian produced a packet from under his pillow, untied it and held out a photograph. I saw a young woman with a pleasant face, who was only like me in the colour of her hair: she was fair. I suppose, when the Austrian said I was like his wife, he was paying me a compliment by way of thanks for my attention.

"I had another larger portrait, Sister, and some of her letters. They were all in my knapsack, and it was left on the battlefield. I had this one"—he pointed to the packet—"hidden away in my bosom."

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Another Austrian held out his wife's photograph, and a third followed suit. They all wanted to talk to me about the women they loved. I looked at the photographs, and listened while the men talked. They spoke with obvious delight, and a childish expression crept over all their faces. For the time being, they forgot that they were at war and prisoners, and that they were speaking to the "enemy." Their dreams and their talk took them back to their homes. . . .

The train goes rolling on. The Austrians look out of the windows, and marvel at what they see: the great woods, which seem to run along with the train for days and nights, the abundance of material and provisions at the stations. But what strikes them most is the length of the journey.

"What a lot of cattle you still have in Russia!" they cried as they watched a

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passing train with trucks full of pigs and oxen. "What a lot of cattle after all these months of war!"

"You feed the wounded well in your trains. The bread is so white and fresh."

"My mother wrote to me lately," said one of them, "and told me that a kilo of meat costs six kronen at home. They're putting something into the bread to save flour. The bread isn't good. What will it be like later, if the war goes on and doesn't come to an end?"

The Austrians in that car were of German origin: two of them were Viennese. In the other cars, besides Germans, there were Serbs, Croats, Ruthenes, Slovaks, Poles, and Roumanians. The Serbs and the Ruthenes kept together and tried to occupy adjoining beds.

"How can you make war on your own people?" I said to the Serbs. "You might have fired on your own brothers!"

"We never fired a shot," answered one of

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the black-eyed Serbs. "We fired into the air."

"Don't you believe him, Sister," said a voice. (It was a Russian officer who had come into our car, and had overheard the conversation.) "They didn't fire? Rubbish! They are given the word of command, they fire, and that is all."

"Is that true?" I asked the Serb in a whisper, when the officer had gone out and the train had started again.

"What else can we do?" he asked with his eyes glowing.

Their first depression has gone completely. Seeing that they were well treated, the prisoners became more and more confiding: they talked to me, told me all about themselves, and asked what was in store for them in Russia.

"Where shall we live?" one of them asked anxiously. And he answered his own question: "Siberia, I suppose. . . ."

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"But we shall die of cold out there," he went on after a short silence.

I felt obliged to tell them that the real Siberia is nothing like the stories told about it in Europe; that the snow and ice are not "eternal"; that the people who live there, far from dying of cold, are in very good health; that Siberia is a very rich country, and that numbers of peasants go there every year from the remote regions of Russia.

"Yes, Russia is a big place. Why do you want our territory? Why do you want to take it away from us?"

I explained that the Russian people had no desire to take anything from the Austrian people, and that Austria began the war.

We are going to G——. A few hours before our arrival, I have to visit all the *tieploushki* and point out to the orderlies the men who are to be bandaged at the clearing-

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station, before being transferred to the train which is to take them up-country.

"Many thanks, Sister," said the Austrian who thought I was like his wife. "The Russian nurses deserve a golden cross for the trouble they take."

"We prefer a Red Cross to a golden one," I said. "If you are so grateful for our work, you should write home to your people and tell them the Russian nurses look after you as though you were their brothers. That will be our best reward."

"It's not enough, Sister. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I was a railway-guard before the war. I used to ply between Vienna and the Russian frontier. When the war is over, and you want to go to Austria, you shall travel without paying: I'll take you for nothing on my train, as you have taken me on yours."

"Many thanks," said I with a laugh. "But when the war is over, I shall forget all about you, and you won't remember me."

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"Do you think the war will last so long as that? It's impossible. There'll be a revolution in Austria. There won't be enough men to carry the war on so long as that. We must make peace! Peace!"

"In Russia we think the war will last at least a year longer."

These words obviously depressed him.

At G—— we had to unload all the wounded who were to be despatched to the heart of Russia. We said good-bye to them all.

"We shall reach Moscow in five or six hours, shan't we?" asked one of the Austrians.

"No. In two days."

"What? Two days? . . . But we have already been travelling three days. Two days more."

"I suppose Russia comes to an end at Moscow, and then Siberia begins?" said another.

"No—no, Russia doesn't come to an end

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at Moscow. It only begins there. It's a long way from there to Siberia."

The Austrians looked at me incredulously. But I had no time to convince them. Our train was ready to go, and I left them.

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X

A STOP AT KIEV—"WE DID NOT WANT THE WAR!"

THERE were two serious cases among the German prisoners in my train. One died this morning early, before sunrise.

The German prisoners look very gloomy and morose. When I go into their car they maintain an obstinate silence. There are five wounded Russians in the same car. My assistant and I, of course, make no distinction between the men we have to nurse: "friends" and "enemies" are alike to us. One of the Germans has a complicated fracture of his leg, which is in a splint. We changed his bandages for him, and he was refreshed and comforted. He tried to keep up his frigid manner, but he could not keep back a smile of pleasure. He will not live long: his condition is too precarious.

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The attitude of the German prisoners is very different from that of the Austrians, who are talkative, gentle, and frank. Even the "wild" Magyars joked with us and taught us their difficult language. When we had done bandaging them they would say: *Hessenam sepan!* (Many thanks!) The Germans were proud and taciturn, and remained so all the way from the front to Kiev.

However, before the train reached its destination, one of them saluted me and said, in an emphatic voice:

"Sister! Thank you for all your trouble and kind attention. I thank you in the name of all!"

The train stopped at Kiev. The stretcher-bearers took the wounded from their beds. The German with the fractured leg, who had no chance of living, beckoned to me. I went up to him, and he said, in a low voice:

"Thank you, Sister! Don't be angry with us. Forgive us. We did not want the war."

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He could not finish his sentence for tears.

"You mustn't cry. You mustn't cry," I said, consoling him. "I am not here to judge you, but to look after you. I am only a Sister of Charity, not a judge."

The man took my hand and kissed it:

"Yes. We did not want the war. It was our Emperor. Forgive us all the harm the war has done you."

Again he wept. And I wanted to weep with him.

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XI

SOLDIERS' LETTERS

OUR "base" is at Brest. Our letters are addressed there. Every time the train passes through we run to the station post-office.

Every mail brings us letters from our old patients.

The letters the soldiers write to their "little Sisters" are always very sincere and very touching.

This very day I have received ten of them.

One soldier sent me a post-card, with these words scribbled by a hand more accustomed to a gun or the plough than a pencil:

"*From Iakov Vassilievitsh.*

"*Year* 1914. 16—.

"I am hastily writing you a letter. How are you, Sister? I send you my humble

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respects, with my love and salutation. Then I want to tell you that I have been finally discharged from military service. And so good-bye. Please answer my letter, Sister.

"Kiev Province, Radomysl district, —— village. . . .

"IAKOV VASSILIEVITSH
"B——SKY."

Another post-card bore the following:

"*Year* 1915, *Month of January.*

"Good-morning, Sister. I salute you, I, Piotr Andreevitsh Ivanov. I am on the German frontier, sixty versts from Warsaw. I have been in battle twice, and God protected me. So good-bye. I am safe and well, and hope you may be the same. My address is: Army on Active Service, —— Regiment, —— Company,

"PIOTR IVANOV."

A peasant, an infantry man, took the trouble to write to me from the hospital, to

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which he had been transferred on leaving our train :

"14 *February*, 1915.

"HONOURED SISTER,

"In opening my letter, I send you my cordial regards, and I wish you every happiness with all my heart. Sister, my heart is touched by your great attention and the delicate care I received at your hands during the journey. I thank you heartily for taking such care of the faithful defenders of our beloved country. May God give you the courage to go on working for the good of Russia. I shall not forget your work and your care until I am in my grave.

"Now I must hasten to tell you my news. I am slowly getting better. I am at Minsk in the hospital for wounded soldiers of the Jewish community. It is a good hospital, the food is excellent, and the Sisters are very kind, so I have nothing but good to say of it. I am very glad to be in such an

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excellent hospital. When I am quite well, I will let you know. So keep well and happy.

"I remain, with profound respects,

"VASSILI P——."

I had had a great deal of trouble with one man through his obstinate refusal to keep on a special bandage which was necessary for a wound in his side. Now he is in a better frame of mind, as I can see by his letter:

"1915, 23, 11.

"MOST HONOURED N. N.,

"I want to write you a few words about myself. The writer of this letter is Serguei Fedorov, soldier: the one who would not wear a cold bandage. Now he has to wear one.

"I am at Moscow in the —— Hospital. There are ten men from your train here. The rest have gone to other towns: Riazan, Tambov, Samara, Kostroma, Penza.

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The very seriously wounded are still in Moscow. We are well looked after, and we are very cheerful here. There are a lot of nurses, all young and so attentive! We can't find a better name for them than the little cherubim. Of course there are some older ones, but not many. We play lotto, cards, and draughts. I am very pleased with the nurses and, on the whole, with everything. Dear Sister, thank you for the help you gave me.

"There are twenty-nine soldiers and one officer in the hospital—five men in a room. It is very quiet lying here.

"There is nothing more to tell you, so good-bye.

"I remain,

"SERGUEI DMITRIEVITSH
F——v."

As the author of the following letter could not write himself, he had to fall back on a more practised pen:

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"DEAR SISTER,

"I arrived at P—— on the 13th of the month, and am in bed in hospital. I felt very bad the day I arrived, but I am better now. My temperature is now sometimes between 38° and 39°, but at first it was 40°. Now, thanks be to God, I am better. The wound in my arm is already healing, and so are the wounds in my leg. The wound in my back still hurts me.

"I am very grateful to you, Sister, for your care and help. If I were to live a hundred years, I should never forget.

"I am always telling the nurses how kind you are and how much I want to thank you with all my heart.

"At first I was not happy here, but I have got used to it: it is not bad. God make me well, and I will write to you myself. The Sister is writing for me now.

"So I wish you all health and happiness.

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"I remain, as you knew me, MIHAIL Z——SKY, from whose leg a piece of shrapnel has been taken."

And another man expresses his pleasure at having heard from me:

"HONOURED SISTER,

"I thank you heartily for your letter which I received on the 3rd March. I was touched to the heart by your kind attention. You work so hard, and you are untiring in looking after us wounded, yet you could find time to answer me, which I had not hoped for.

"I shall remember you and your kind attention as long as I live, and, if you do not mind, I will always let you know what happens to me in the future.

"Now I wish you good health and success in your work.

"Now I must give you my news: I am better, but not through yet. I still have to

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stay in bed. I am not very bored. There is a Sister in our hospital who is as kind a lady as yourself. So I can only thank everybody for their kindness and trouble in nursing me. Now there is only one thing left for me to do: to get better, and go back to the front.

"I wish you all good things, and remain most respectfully,

"V. P——FF."

Our patients often ask us for our photographs. There is a chivalrous note in their letters to us on this subject:

"19/30 *April*, 1915.

"DEAR N. N.,

"Thank you for the photograph you sent me. I shall keep it for many years in memory of the great European war and your kindness. Your gentle care will remain with me for many, many years. I salute you, and my family does likewise:

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Philippe Stiepanovitch, Alexandra Ivanovna, my wife, and the children, Olga, Kostia, Misha, Petia.

"We have put your photograph in a gold frame.

"So good-bye. We hope you will be well for many years.

"I remain,

"PHILIPPE STIEPANOVITSH MITRAFANOV.

"Soldier wounded . . .
Saratov, —— Street."

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XII

SMOLENSK—TO FOLLOW HER HUSBAND—DISMANTLING A PALACE

At Smolensk we were told that we could go no farther. We had to help to clear the wounded from the hospitals of the town, where they were expecting the seriously wounded from the front.

An hour later we were in the thick of it. Most of our new guests were convalescent, and had passed the most difficult stage of recovery.

Two stretcher-bearers brought up a soldier. A woman followed them. The patient was laid on a bed. The woman stayed by the door.

"Strangers are not admitted," I said to her. "Are you waiting for someone?"

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"I am with my husband, Sister. He sent for me to our village. I only arrived in Smolensk yesterday morning, and he is being taken away to-day. I want to go to Moscow with him. Please arrange it, Sister."

I promised to do so, and went to see our Chief.

"She can travel in the kitchen," said the Chief. "But don't forget that I know nothing about it officially," she added.

I thanked my good "Chief," and hurried back to the woman. I found another woman with her.

"My little sister wants to go in the train too. She has only just come to Smolensk."

"Good, but I must know whether her husband is in the train. What carriage is he in? And you must produce your papers."

They did so, and I took them to the kitchen-car, where there was an empty compartment, used ordinarily for washing-

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up. I asked the cooks to give them some food.

In the evening, while we stopped at a big dressing-station, I went to see the two women to ask if they were comfortable.

"Thank you, yes, thank you. We have had something to eat and drink. We are very comfortable."

"Sister," said the other, "my husband will soon be well again, and they will send him back to the front. I want to go with him. How can I manage it? I would wear a soldier's uniform. . . ."

She was medium-sized, dark and thin. In a man's clothes, with her hair cut short, she would look like a young gipsy.

"Good. There is no harm in it. But how do you propose to do it?"

She sketched out a whole plan. When the soldiers went to the station to join up, she would fall in with the battalion dressed as a soldier. If they asked her where she

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came from, she would say she was lost, and was looking for her regiment.

"We have no children, Sister. Why should I stay alone at home? It is better to die with my husband."

The other woman, who had chestnut hair and soft sad eyes, told me she had three children, and that she had great difficulty in arranging to leave home to go to see her husband.

We stopped a long time at the station. I took the two women into the cars where their husbands were, and gave them leave to stay half an hour.

"Talk it over with your husbands, and decide what you will do next."

At Moscow I asked the nurses at the "clearing-station" to take charge of the women, and to see that they were not separated from their husbands.

We are stopping nowhere. We are going straight on towards the *Poushtsha* (dense

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forest) of Bielovege. It is the Tsar of Russia's game preserve, famous for its aurochs.

When our train stopped at Bielovege, the long platform, covered over with an artistic roof, supported by sculptured pillars, was crammed with furniture and pictures. This was the furniture from the Imperial Palace in the *Poushtsha*, which was being removed so that it might not fall into the hands of the Germans.

We had to pick up some patients from a hospital in an annexe of the Palace. But they were not to be taken until the afternoon.

So we had time to visit the Palace, which was ten minutes' walk from the station.

We crossed a bridge, and found ourselves in an avenue leading to the Palace gates. No one was on guard. We walked into the park, in the middle of which was a fine building rather like a castle of the Middle Ages. There was a fountain in front of the

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castle. An arched passage led to a covered staircase, on which was a busy crowd of servants in black livery. We asked if we could go over the Palace, and were told that we could. But there were only the bare walls to be seen, for all the furniture had been taken away. The wealth of the decorations and the elegant architecture, however, bore witness to the splendour of this deserted retreat. . . .

The Germans found nothing in the Palace, and had to put up with the slender booty to be wrung from the peasants of the neighbouring villages. . . .

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XIII

MORE WOUNDED THAN BEDS—THE CREEPING HOURS—A BOMB ON A HOSPITAL TRAIN—THE BURNED CITY

THE journey from Kiev to Ir—— took a whole day, and we did not arrive until evening. We loaded the train all night, for we had to hurry.

There were more casualties than beds, and there were eleven men left, whom I could not accommodate.

I tried to convince them:

"There is nothing to be done but to wait for the next train. Be patient, my men."

They agreed to go back to the clearing-station, and I was just going with them, when a gentleman who had overheard the conversation said:

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"No, Sister. You mustn't take them back to the clearing-station. If you have no room in your train, put them in P——tsh's train, which is just behind yours."

The gentleman, who was wearing a rain-proof coat with an officer's epaulettes, and a chauffeur's goggles on his nose, saw that I was doubtful, and added:

"They will be well looked after in the train."

"Come," I said to the men. . . . But what am I to tell them on the train?" I asked the gentleman as he moved away. "I must give the name of my authority for taking them."

What? This was P——tsh himself! This was the fierce reactionary and instigator of pogroms, and I am a "sister" to him! Only the war could produce such results. The German social-democrats are my "enemies," and I, a Russian Socialist, have become a "sister" to P——tsh! . . .

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We are awaiting our orders at F——. We have been waiting for more than a day. The hours creep by horribly slowly. News comes in, more and more alarming: the Austrians are still advancing, and are near Mel——. And Mel—— is not far from F——. We are told that there are many casualties at Mel——. We begged the Chief to send us with a few *tieploushki* to collect the wounded. The Chief would not consent:

"I have no instructions."

Another day crept by as we waited for our instructions. A telegram came during the night: our train is to go to Mel—— at once. And we got there in the morning.

There were two trains in the station. One was laden with rails and munitions: the other was carrying a "revictualling detachment."

The wounded were lying on the platform and the track. There were numbers of them. Those who could walk got up and

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went to the fourth-class cars, and rapidly filled the three tiers of beds, and thronged the corridors. All the available space was occupied. Those who could not walk were taken—even the dying, and those *in extremis.* The movable beds in the *tieploushki* were pulled out, the wounded were placed in them, and carried into the cars.

While we were arranging our men an Austrian aeroplane appeared. The staff were too much occupied to notice the danger, but the wounded outside moved about anxiously on their stretchers.

"Take us away from here! Take us away! It is straight above us!"

"We have escaped from one death to meet another!"

"Start the train!"

Suddenly—boom! The bomb fell from the aeroplane. It burst not far from the train and wounded a soldier. He was hurried into a *tieploushka.*

Our guns began to fire on the aeroplane.

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Our gunnery seemed to be effective, for the machine sped away and disappeared from view.

The seriously wounded were still being brought in. All the beds were full already. Where could we put the newcomers? I sought out our Chief. She was talking to the doctor attached to the revictualling train.

"We must take all the wounded away as soon as possible," she said, with great emotion. "They are going to couple seven goods-waggons on to our train. We will put the slightly wounded in them. If we still want room we will put the men on the floors of the *tieploushki*."

"All the beds are filled with the seriously wounded," said I. "We can't put the seriously wounded on the floor."

A Sister from the revictualling train came up to me, and said in a low voice:

"Everything is ready for the retreat. As soon as your train starts ours will follow,

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and then they are going to blow up the station. We can't leave the wounded to the Austrians. We must take them all, even the dying. Your train has room for four hundred and fifty cases. Even if ten, fifteen, or twenty-five die on the road, you will save the lives of six hundred others by taking them away from here."

"We must make haste," said the Chief.

I ran back to my trucks.

"There is a man dying in my car," said one of the orderlies, as soon as I arrived.

I went into the *tieploushka.* The man leaped up from his bed. The orderly held him down. The blood was oozing through the bandages round his stomach.

"Pass me a compress," I said to my assistant. "Quick!"

I took the man's hand; his pulse was weak and irregular; his eyes were staring into space.

I injected camphor. The man groaned, glared at me, and murmured:

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"They are going to take us back to our own province, aren't they?"

He slipped back into unconsciousness. An hour later he was dead.

My assistant and I visited all the beds, readjusting badly-tied bandages, and giving injections of camphor and morphia. . . . We were urged to hurry up, but we had to fill the seven goods-waggons which had been added on to our train for the wounded. At last the train was full up. All the wounded had been removed, and we started.

I sat with my assistant in one of our *tieploushki*, looking with a feeling of utter helplessness at the heap of humanity contained in it. All of them were in a serious condition; their dressings were saturated; and some of them were spitting blood. Where was I to begin? Evening was falling; it was difficult to work by the light of a candle. But I had to do what I could. And we set to work. . . .

When everybody had been attended to

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we went to the doorway. An enormous column of red light stood out against the sky; sparks were flying.

"I suppose that is Mel—— burned down," I said. "That means that our men have already withdrawn from there."

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XIV

MORE LETTERS OF THANKS—A LYRICAL EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

ONCE more we passed through Brest, and I had another packet of letters from wounded soldiers.

"1915, 16 *July*.

"In the first words of my letter, I salute my merciful sister, N. N. You cared for us as though we were your children. We thank you. Only Jesus could have cared for us as well as you have done. We thank you. May the Lord give you health, and may the General send you a letter.

"Address your letter to P——, Hospital ——, Room ——.

"NIKITA FEDOROVITSH B——."

The General's letter of which Nikita Fedorovitsh spoke is a diploma, or certifi-

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cate, which our patients very often want us to receive.

The soldier of the Guard who wanted me to be puffed in a reactionary newspaper was not satisfied with my refusal. And some time later he sent to the Central Committee of the Zemstvos the following document, which our Headquarters sent on to us:

"*To the Director of the Union of Zemstvos.*"

"We have had the pleasure of travelling in train No. —— as soldiers wounded on the field of battle, on the —— July. And we are very grateful to you for your care of us. And the Sisters of Charity appointed by the Union looked after us with great devotion and kindness. Train No. —— contained only serious cases, hardly one of whom had been wounded by a rifle bullet. All had been hit by shrapnel; some had fractures in arms and legs; several had many serious

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wounds all over the body, and were in great pain. Yet the Sisters on our dear train were never idle for a moment, but renewed our dressings several times a day, did everything possible to allay the sufferings of the wounded, and often sat all through the night by their bedsides, helping them, and talking to them, never sparing their own health, eating nothing for days together, and having never a chance to sleep. There were about four hundred of us in the train, almost all serious cases, and, thanks to the Sisters, only two men died in four days. May God keep them all in good health, especially little Sister N. N.!

"Yours respectfully,

"JACOB J—— (wounded).

"Private of the Regiment of the Guard."

The N.C.O. who wrote the following letter noticed various offences against good manners in his travelling companions:

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"Dear Sister,

"Excuse my troubling you with this letter. I send you my heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable work. You were tireless in looking after us, and worked for days and nights without ceasing. But there were certain soldiers among us who were lacking in respect, and, instead of giving thanks, used to grumble. However, you never paid any attention to that, you Sisters. Once more I send you my heartfelt gratitude. I was so touched by it all that I cannot praise enough the care and the help we found with you during the seven days of our stay under the protection of the Sisters and assistant surgeon in car No. 11, train No. ——, of the Pan-Russian Union of Zemstvos.

"Dear Sister, I must tell you about my wounds. They are progressing favourably, thanks be to God. Only my wounds are suppurating, and I cannot sit up for long. Dear Sister, I believe that if I am as well cared for in hospital as I was in car

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No. 11 I shall soon be able to go back to punish the enemy. I am being treated in Petrograd. . . .

"So, good-bye. May God allow you to go on with your honourable labours for the comfort and blessing of our valorous army, and the peril and death of our perfidious enemies.

"MIKHAIL NIKOLAIEV G——,
"N.C.O., wounded in the stomach,
formerly of Car No. 11.

"1915, *July* 17."

And here gratitude finds lyrical expression:

"*To the glorious, compassionate, patient, industrious N. N.*"

"DEAR SISTER OF MERCY N. N.,

"I send you with all my heart my homage and my respects. May God grant you good health during your arduous labours for Holy Russia! You suffer as

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much as we. You have to wash and clean every soldier as they come in covered with mud and wounds. You have to bandage them and encourage them with kindly words. Dear, compassionate Sister N. N., you have had a rare upbringing and a fine education. And you have had to forget all your beautiful past life, and to fulfil your sacred duty, according to the Word of our Lord, who told us to succour those who suffer. And you have gone out upon the hard way of action, to lessen the sufferings of your soldier brothers. May God grant you energy in your good and noble work! And we soldiers will pray to the Lord to help you to bear all your labours and not to let your generous work go unrewarded.

"Dear Sister of Mercy N. N., my wound is better. No operation was needed; the fragment of shell is buried in my leg and does not disturb me; the wound is healed over, and there is no abscess. On the 15 August, I shall ask to leave hospital, and

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I shall rejoin the Army at the front, to punish the brutal German.

"With all respects to yourself, and gratitude to all,

"JACOB J——, N.C.O.

"1915, *August* 10.

"*P. S.*—When I go back to the war, I will send your photograph to my people for them to keep in memory of a kind, good worker and Sister of Charity."

More thanks.

"1915, 16 *July*.

"First of all I must tell you, dear Sister, that I have had an operation, but my leg is still very bad. I have been cut open in several places, and rubber tubes have been inserted. I do not know how long I shall stay here. So au revoir. Keep well, dear Sister. I wish you all good things, and great happiness in your life.

"My address. . . ."

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Everybody in the train is happy. Among the last batch of letters is one from our Varia, transformed into the volunteer, Sergei S——. She writes from a prisoners' camp in Germany. Her regiment took part in a battle, and she was slightly wounded and captured by the enemy. She is now in a camp with other Russians, and the Germans have no suspicion that the young soldier is a girl.

Varia is alive! The good news has made us all happy.

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XV

SAD NEWS

We have been ordered to K—— in Galicia. The wounded were to be brought to us there by a narrow gauge military railway. We have been waiting in vain for the last three days: no casualties have arrived. Those who have been brought in give us somewhat distressing news: our men are short of munitions, and have been obliged to retire.

Someone announced that Przemysl had been retaken by the Austro-Germans. We could not believe it. But we heard even more distressing news: the Germans were near Lemberg. We could only bow before the sad reality.

The Russians were retiring! We knew that it is difficult to pick up the seriously wounded during a retreat, and we could visualize the fields, woods, and roads with

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our men, stricken down and dying, lying there unaided and uncared for!

We had to return to Brest. The news of the surrender of Przemysl and Lemberg had been officially announced. It was painful for me to go among my patients, whose efforts and sufferings in carrying the Russian Army to the Carpathians had all been wasted. What could I say to them if they questioned me? . . . It was even more painful to be so near the happenings of the war, and at the same time so ignorant of all things military—"strategy" and "tactics." Why had our Army retired?

Przemysl and Lemberg! What a river of Russian blood had flowed for them!

The atmosphere grew more and more oppressive. We were ordered to fill our train at once, at Brest. Fears were entertained for the town, and the hospitals were cleared. But we could not take the wounded from the local hospitals, because

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others were being sent to us straight from the front—slight casualties, not serious cases.

"Where are the others? Where did you leave them? I asked the soldiers.

"Don't ask, Sister," they said in despair. "They were left on the field of battle. We had to fight a rear-guard action. Those who could walk left. Those who were too seriously wounded had to wait for the Germans to come on. God knows it is not our fault, Sister. We poured out our blood without fear and took no thought for our lives. But when you haven't enough munitions you can do nothing. . . . But it doesn't matter, Sister. Don't take it too hardly. Wait a little. . . . We'll take back everything we have lost. Lemberg will be ours!"

I don't know why, but of all the Austrian towns won and lost by our army, Lemberg is the most interesting to our soldiers. They regard it as an old Russian town, and they love it. And indeed it is perhaps the most "Russian" of the towns in Galicia and Bukovina.

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XVI

ARRIVAL AT VILNA—PRAYERS FOR VICTORY—THE STATUE OF CATHERINE II.

Our train was ordered to Vilna, and we reached there in the morning. The train was shunted on to the fifth siding, and we waited our orders to fill up. We had a few hours to ourselves, and took a fly for a drive through the capital of Lithuania. The station, as usual, was crammed with soldiers, some sound and ready for the road, others wounded and waiting to be sent to the rear. But they were not the only ones to withdraw. Orders had come to evacuate Vilna, which would soon be occupied by the Austrians.

Interminable convoys filed through the streets. Detachments of troops passed along. Two-wheeled Red Cross carts went by with the wounded.

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Our driver took us to the centre of the town. In one of the streets we found an enormous arch joining it with another street. An immense crowd was kneeling in front of the arch, praying with tears in their eyes. The arch was surmounted with a holy image, and a Catholic priest, also kneeling, was intoning the prayer with his hands outstretched towards it. There was a crowd of well-dressed ladies herded with soldiers, poorly clad women, children, and old men. The Polish coachman explained that common prayers were being offered up for the safety of the country and for victory, and that the image had miraculous powers.

We crossed a few more streets and found ourselves in front of an Orthodox church. A great bell was being taken down from a belfry: it had to be taken out through a hole made in the wall. The church was surrounded by a silent crowd; only a few women were in tears.

Further on was another church, a Catholic

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church. The bells were being taken away here too. The workmen who had been given the job were hemmed in by a mob of sobbing women imploring them in excited tones not to touch the "voice of God." Other women, with an expression of mystic terror on their faces, stood motionless, as though they were turned to stone. . . .

We came to the Cathedral. In front of it was a square in which was a statue of Catherine II. In front of this a kind of crane had been erected, and from this hung a rope which had been wound round the neck of the bronze Empress. Never surely was the Great Empress treated with so little respect.

"They are lifting her down to take her away," explained the driver.

Then we learned that the statue of the famous dictator, Mouraviev, the conqueror of the Polish insurrection of 1863, who was called Mouraviev the Hangman by the Poles, had been lifted down in the same way, by means of a crane. . . .

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We stopped the fly outside a confectioner's and went in to buy some sweets, but chiefly to talk to the girl in the shop.

"What ought we to do, Sister?" she asked. "Ought we to leave the town, or not? The banks, the post-office, and all the official establishments are already closed. But we are told that the population need not be anxious, and must not listen to panic-mongers. They won't issue tickets to civilians at the station. But everybody who has any money has gone away. People hire vans and place the children and the furniture in them, and go off to stations, sixty or seventy versts away, where anybody can get a ticket."

After that our attention was called to the number of vans and carts full of fugitives.

When we returned to the station, we saw a train full of refugees escaping from Vilna. An orderly told us that the train had been there a long time, and that ever since the morning an old man among the refugees

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had been walking up and down the platform with a dead baby in his arms. The child, which was only a few months old, had died early in the morning, and the old man did not know what to do with the body. He did not want to go far from the train, which might start at any moment, for he had some other children in it.

At last a policeman came up, and took away the body.

I visited the refugees' train. The goods-waggons were packed with travellers, children, old men, women. They had been waiting for three days, but the line was blocked with troop-trains. They had been promised that they should start that day. They came from the suburbs of Vilna and from the neighbouring villages.

Our train was moved on to the clearing-station, and we began filling up. In the middle of our work an unknown officer came aboard. He was deathly pale and full of deep emotion.

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"Kovno has been surrendered to the Germans. But there were plenty of munitions and food there. The men of the garrison clamoured to defend the place. But the Commander-in-Chief evacuated it. Kovno has been sold. . . ."

A long time afterwards we read in the papers that General G——, formerly in command of the fortress of Kovno, had been sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude by a Court-martial for having surrendered the fortress to the enemy without any plausible motive. So the unknown officer was right. . . .

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XVII

THE OPTIMISM OF THE WOUNDED—AUSTRIA OR RUSSIA?—ONE MONTH'S LEAVE

OUR train has been sent to the South-West lines, near the frontier of the Bukovina. It is the beginning of September.

We are at P——, once a fortress on the Russo-Austrian frontier. An enormous number of casualties, both "friends" and "enemies," were waiting for us.

"Your orders are to take all the Russian wounded and the Austrians who are seriously wounded and in need of immediate medical assistance," said the chief medical officer.

While the Russian wounded were being carried to the train on stretchers, we went to select the seriously wounded from among the Austrian prisoners.

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The wounded Austrians were lying in a big shed, with a glass roof, on an asphalt pavement covered with straw. Almost all of them were in a serious condition; many of them had fractured legs and arms.

In all there were not less than five hundred of them. That fact gives the lie to the report spread by the Austro-German Press that the Russians abandon enemy wounded on the field of battle and let them die.

We examined the Austrians, chose the most serious cases, and our orderlies carried them to the train.

As we went I asked one of the men how they had been made prisoners, and the man, an Orthodox *Russin* of Bukovina, who spoke a dialect very much like Little Russian, told me:

"We were advancing against your troops. But your men surrounded us. We wanted to surrender, and we began to raise our arms, when the Austrians, who were coming up after us, began to fire at us from behind.

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The Russians had to drive our men back in order to make us prisoners. . . . Now winter is coming. It will cost our Army dear. They can't bear the cold as well as your men. They get frozen feet."

While I was binding up our men I asked them what was actually happening at the front.

"It's going on all right, Sister! There are plenty of munitions. We can pepper the enemy. Don't you worry about the retreat. Lemberg will be ours again. We shall do for the Germans. The Austrians don't matter. They depend on the Germans. When the Germans are done for, there'll be no more Austrians!"

The man laughed. He repeated several times over, in a confident tone:

"There are plenty of munitions; victory is not far off."

We left the Russian wounded at Kiev, where we picked up another batch of

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Austrians, and we had to take them all, including those we took in at P——, to Darnitza, a station not far from Kiev.

As we arrived at Darnitza by night, unloading was put off until morning. We were up at sunrise. We left the train and were really astonished at what we saw. Where were we? In Russia or in Austria? Everywhere there were Austrian soldiers, Austrian orderlies, and even Austrian doctors. In front of the tents put up near the station were a number of Austrian military cooks.

A Russian Army doctor came up to us, and, pointing to an Austrian *Feldwebel*, said:

"That man will look after the Austrian stretcher-bearers while their wounded are taken out of the train."

The stretcher-bearers carried the men out one by one and laid the litters on the platform. The wounded men were amazed at seeing only Austrian uniforms round them.

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"You don't know whether you are in Russia or Austria?" said I in German.

"We are neither in Russia nor in Austria. We are simply in the war," said someone behind me.

I turned and saw an Austrian officer.

"Excuse me," I said drily, "but I do not speak German very well."

"I will speak French if you like," he said in very good French.

So I asked him how he had been taken prisoner.

A shade of annoyance passed over his face. I did not understand much of what he replied. Partly it was by ill-luck that he had fallen into the hands of the Russians, partly through being with Slav troops.

"But for the Slavs in our ranks, all these Poles, Tsechs, and Ruthenes, we, the Hungarians and the Germans, would have been victorious long ago. But we have Slavs in our country, and we have to

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keep our guns loaded, not only in readiness for you but for them too. They prevent our waging war successfully."

When I heard him say this, I remembered a German wounded prisoner who had said precisely the same thing of the Austrians in general.

"You are a Hungarian?"

"Yes, Madame! You are afraid of me? I suppose you think the Hungarians are savages."

"There is nothing to be afraid of. You are our prisoner."

"I know that, Madame. But the wildest stories are told about the Hungarians among your people. In reality, we are only cruel during the fight. When the struggle is over, we behave like gentlemen towards our enemies."

An order was given, and the prisoners were led from the platform to the camp reserved for them. The Hungarian officer went with them.

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Another winter is coming, on bringing with it a prolonged lull all along the line. I have taken advantage of it to ask for a month's leave. I was not refused, for I have been working for nearly a year without a rest.

I left Kiev the same day, and am now on the way to Moscow, whence I shall go to France. I had known France in time of peace. I want to see it while the war is on.

At a station between Moscow and Petrograd an officer came excitedly into the car and shouted:

"Gentlemen, great news from France. The French have broken through the German line in Champagne. Thousands of prisoners have fallen into the hands of the French. It means Victory!"

Everybody thronged round the officer and joyfully discussed the news. And everybody felt at that moment that the collabora-

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tion of the allied nations is not a mere word. We were living in that moment with the same thoughts and the same joy as the French people.

THE END.

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